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WITH THE HELP OF THE ANGELS

A Novel

BY

WILFRID WOOLLAM

"Chance—that is the work of the angels"

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WITH THE HELP OF THE ANGELS

PROLOGUE.

"Do you want *me?*"

"Yes, come in. Didn't you see me beckon you?"

"But I didn't know whether I ought to come through the window—must I? And my boots are dirty."

"Never mind. Come in. So you are Barty Brown? And Mrs. Nodder tells me you are fond of pictures!"

"My name is Tom. But I'm Tom Brown really—not Barty Brown. Oh, you have a lot of very beautiful pictures! May I show you my mother? because Mr. Patterwell says it's worth fifty pounds."

"By all means. I should very much like to see it."

"Oh, thank you! I'll fetch it." And the young gentleman, about eight years old, who had so frankly announced his name and his appreciation of the pictures which he saw around him, was about to make his exit through the open window as suddenly as he had appeared.

He had come from the next house but one, by the veranda which ran along the second-story windows from one end of St. Philip's Terrace to the other.

"Here, come back, Barty. I'll look at that picture by-

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and-by. Sit down, and pitch into those strawberries. Why haven't you ever been in before?"

Tom turned round and surveyed his new acquaintance with a kindly critical eye.

He was a sturdy little fellow, rather shabbily dressed—and, to be candid, his boots were not the only part of him that was dirty. But he had a very pleasing face, beautiful eyes, and a wealth of brown curly hair.

"I didn't know that you wanted me; and I didn't know that—that I should like you. But I like you very much, Mr. Fairfax—you are very kind—shall I help myself?"

"Yes," said Mr. Fairfax. "But not in that way," he added, as Tom relinquished the spoon after putting half a dozen strawberries on a plate; and he proceeded to shovel out a portion more suitable to a boy's receptive capacity.

"Oh, Mr. Fairfax, oh!" said Tom, and forthwith began to take a new survey of the somewhat luxurious room, with the plate of strawberries on his knee, his conversational powers placed under disadvantage, and periodically suspended altogether.

Yes, it looked to Tom a very luxurious room, very elegant and artistic. But this effect was not due to the upholstery. It was due to Mr. Fairfax's etchings and water-colors, his antique *secrétaire*, his easy chairs, and innumerable knick-knacks that were strewn about with artistic effect.

His landlady certainly had humored his elegant taste by tying back his curtains with some very pretty sashes,

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and setting his things off with an effective wall-paper.

Fairfax paid well for his rooms, and—at this time—punctually. Then the unfinished or unframed paintings standing on their easels—for Mr. Fairfax was a painter, if he could make a distinct claim to any profession—greatly impressed Tom.

Meanwhile the occupier of what Tom afterward described as the most beautiful room he had ever seen—in a velvet jacket and very neat slippers—reclined in a basket lounge, smoking a cigarette, with a good many art publications and some daily papers strewn about him on the carpet. The substantial remains of a breakfast, by no means frugal, still stood on the table, with the dish of strawberries, which even Tom's liberal helping had not left nearly empty.

Mr. Fairfax never harassed his landlady with petty economies.

Just now he seemed to enjoy his cigarette, and the sight of Tom devouring his strawberries, and the scraps of conversation with which Tom was able to entertain him between times, very much indeed.

And when the cigarette and strawberries were finished, Mr. Fairfax began to enjoy Tom's company even more. He found the boy entertaining, and by the time Tom's visit had come to an end, had begun to like him very much.

"Well, good-by, then, Tom—if I mayn't call you Barty."

"Oh, well, *you* may, Mr. Fairfax, if—if you very much want to."

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"Oh, no; 'Tom' will do. I like 'Tom.' But how did you get it—your nickname? Tell me again."

"I wrote it on my slate—my full name, you know, Tom Bart Brown—and I told Mr. Bocking why I did it. It was a dictation letter; and they all laughed."

"And you didn't like that; so you had three fights."

"Yes, altogether; not all at once. Because, you know, my mother told me Bart Brown was our full name, but she didn't use it. She thought that just Mrs. Brown was nicer; but she told me not to forget—oh, I remember how we talked about it very well—that it was our full name. So I always sign myself Tom Bart Brown to remember her by. Shouldn't you?"

"I should."

"But Mrs. Nodder says 'it's stuff and nonsense,' because I was only christened Tom, or Thomas, I think, and that's true, because she has the paper—I'm only Tom Brown there. But my full name is Tom Bart Brown, and I shall keep it to remember my mother by. My father died, you know, when I was a very, very little boy."

"You are quite right, my boy, and never you be laughed out of what you think is right. Very likely Bart was your mother's name!"

"Yes, I think it was; that is why I like it. And I know it's my full name, because my mother showed it to me when we talked that time—when she told me that she had dropped the Bart. Mrs. Nodder says I've mixed things up; but I don't think I have. It was written very big, and beautiful and plain, 'Thomas Bart Brown,' and I

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always try to write exactly like it—except that I put Tom. I shall put Thomas when I'm grown up. But you want to paint, Mr. Fairfax. Good-by."

"Good-by, my little man. Come and see me again some time."

"I will. I'll come this afternoon."

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CHAPTER I

AT THE END OF HIS TETHER

"OUR STUDIO, 9 ST. PHILIP'S TERRACE,
"May 15, 188–, midnight.

"MY DEAR TOM:

"Before you get this you will have had a good cry, and have been told a great many things about me. You will not understand it until you are grown up. But don't cry any more or you may be making me very, very unhappy. Good-by for a long, long time. Be a good, brave boy; and always remember that Mrs. Nodder has been very kind to you, if she is a bit crabby. Stick to being a gentleman, and never mind Johnny Gubbs laughing at you. I am leaving you all my paints and things, and the picture on the easel, and twenty-five pounds—all I have. They will be taken care of for you. But don't be an artist when you are grown up if you can help it. I find it very hard leaving you, but I must. If people tell you I was insane, don't contradict them. Perhaps they are right. If they say I was a very wicked man, tell them that is God's affair. Good-by, my boy; God bless you! Stick to being a gentleman; and always get Mrs. Nodder to mend your clothes and give you clean collars. Never tell lies—try every day to grow brave—don't give up saying your prayers at bed-time—think of others, and God will think of you. Oh, Tom, my boy, if I could see any way——"

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George Fairfax had written so much before he realized the incongruity and absurdity of his letter. Then he threw down his pen, pressed his hands to his temples, and rose and paced the room. He was not "being brave." He was not "thinking of others," not of his one little friend who asked so little—and as for going on saying his prayers at bedtime, he had thought to snatch the sleep of death with violence; and what could he say to God at such a bedtime as that?

A loaded revolver lay on the table at which he was writing, and a picture of the death of Chatterton hung on the wall at his elbow—at once a horrible and beautiful thing, showing the exceeding loveliness of death in the poet's face, and the little phial which had rolled out of his white, dead hand on the floor by his couch, with which he had defied the whole hard world—and God.

Fairfax's room was neat and tidy, all but in a condition for the next tenant, without signs of any work having been done lately. But there was one picture, standing on an easel in a conspicuous place, as if it had been placed there to attract attention. It had recently been rejected by the Academy, and Fairfax thought that he would never paint a better.

It was a painting of Tom standing in that very room—their studio. The boy was clutching the portrait of a lady, and looking defiantly at two men—one with a pocket-book in his hand—who were overhauling the room, and evidently seizing effects for debt. Both Tom's face, frank and warlike, and the lady's face, beautiful and rather scornful, were painted with great force, and they bore a strong resemblance to each other.

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The picture would have needed no title in any catalogue. The boy's attitude and expression said plainly, "You shall never take this—it is my mother!"

When George Fairfax had walked up and down his room for half an hour—pausing several times to look down on his revolver and on that unfinished letter to Tom—he went to the window, drew up the blind, opened the sash, and stepped out on to the veranda.

It was nearly midnight in May. The air was cool. There was no sound of toil, for the toilers had long been asleep, and not a rumble from the wheels of restless pleasure reached that grim brick, three-storied terrace with its black veranda.

The pleasure-seekers—if any—returning to St. Philip's Terrace would walk back with their shoes in their pockets or in paper parcels.

Fairfax looked out at the grim black church towering into the star-sprinkled violet sky, on the verge of the black town blinking behind it, and gave a groan.

But black as it was, St. Philip's Church looked to him less black and ugly than it had ever looked before, and exactly over its looming tower in the blue calm sky he saw the constellation of Orion—like a cross in stars swung down from heaven over the sin-blacked cross beneath, and then he knew that the spell of his evil angel had been broken.

Fairfax hated Barnfield. It was a place of iron, said to be the dirtiest and most hospitable town in England. But he had known little of its hospitality, and the dirt had choked him, and the iron of it had entered into his heart.

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He had come there two years ago with two or three hundred pounds left of a little fortune which had been very unwisely lost, if not squandered; and now he had come to his last twenty-five pounds, after being eased of all his superfluous bits of personal property by the sheriff's officers.

He had come to Barnfield because it was his native town, and his father had been buried there, long ago—the Vicar of St. Clement's—a suburban church, boasting a congregation exclusively composed of "carriage people," whose spiritual wants, which were excessive, Mr. Fairfax had struggled with for ten years, and then succumbed to. Moreover, Barnfield had very few painters, and very many wealthy citizens, who bought pictures by the wallful.

Fairfax knew he could paint, and had intended to set about it in good earnest; but so far his new enterprise had ended in the art patrons of Barnfield buying one or two of his pictures at a price which paid for the canvas and the meals he consumed while at work on it. But he had not yet learned to accommodate himself to such small earnings. Moreover, he had been very ambitious, and seemed doomed to be a failure.

If any one will take the trouble to attend one picture-dealer's sale in this day, he will know what failure means to a painter! Where *do* they all go, those beautiful bits of colored thought, which teem from artists' brains who are dying in attics? God knows! And he may know why the artist *must* go on making more of them, instead of learning to plough or of getting coals in if he is past learning.

Verily this is an age of progress, and enlightenment,

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and culture! You can starve people and "sweat" them—those people at least whom you can do without, who only teach you and charm you, and better you—a little; and they will thank you—some of them—almost going down on their knees, and call you the patrons of art. But you are not! You are ostentatious, advertising house-decorators, who only understand marketing and trade-marks. You go often up to the temple of Art, but it is only to the money-changers; and you profane it. You are killing the prophets, and your children will live narrowed and sordid lives. You, Barnfield, whose fair palaces in green parks belt the black pit whence ye were digged—white-suburbed city of the purple hills, that smiles by the lake of smoke—you, Barnfield, for whom art—God's art and song have done so much, what have you done for artists and singers? Less than any other town! But you cannot help it—you haven't the time—being the most favored and pampered daughter of an evil and froward generation in haste to be rich. And your children are rich. But their riches will not buy them souls, which they so much need. They will die, nearly all of them, neither loved nor admired—only envied. And they will have no record in the days to come, save one big tinsel tottering monument for all their generation lumped together:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
WEALTH,
WHICH PASSED AWAY, etc., etc.

George Fairfax thought hardly of the world, and very hardly of Barnfield as he looked then on its lurid face,

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asleep under the quiet stars. He cursed his native town, and cursed himself—with similar folly—and was not wanting counsellors who bade him curse God too, and die.

But death, when summoned imperiously by a weak mortal, does not come with an olive-leaf and a kiss. He comes with a masked face, bearing a naked sword—clearer, more terrible, every step he takes—and if men do not shut their eyes at once, and fling themselves upon him, they recoil, tremble, look away at the stars, or the sun-steeped meadows, or the face of a little child, and fly back into the open arms of a tender stooping God, and hide themselves in his vesture.

So George Fairfax did, as more of our neighbors have done than we dream of.

He went back into his room and shut the window, unloaded his revolver and put it by, tore up his self-accusing letter to Tom; then flung himself into a chair, brushed away the blessed tears from his opened eyes, and promised God to be a better man.

Moreover, he promised himself to stick to Tom through thick and thin, and, at present, to black Barnfield and 9 St. Philip's Terrace, for Tom's sake.

St. Philip's Terrace, though a good way from the heart of the town, and boasting a few blackened old trees which were dying hard, had long ceased to offer "a desirable suburban residence."

It was a row of well-built, spacious houses, some of them with stables behind them, and had once belonged to some of Barnfield's notable people. Now they were tenanted by third-rate doctors and advertising dentists with large families, people who were experimenting in "flats," and

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ladies "reduced," or otherwise especially adapted for the business of letting rooms.

One of the houses with a stable was taken by a brewer's agent, who filled the yard with barrels, and put his head man Robbins into the house to look after his interests, while Mrs. Robbins looked after lodgers.

Mr. Robbins was a chum of Tom's. But Fairfax was not his chum; he was his master and his hero, whom he adored.

Tom, now ten years old, had spent some portion of every day for the last two years in Fairfax's studio. He had his own corner, where he drew and daubed with the materials which his friend gave him in abundance, along with much real, patient help; and the boy's career was quite a settled thing in his own mind.

But there was Mrs. Nodder to be considered. And Mrs. Nodder stigmatized art without any classification as trumpery, and artists as "people who were bad at payin'"; and Tom "belonged" to Mrs. Nodder.

He was not a possession she seemed to set great store by; she neither poured out love nor luxuries for him very lavishly, and she frequently boxed his ears. But for three years she had "done for him," which expression—her own—describes a considerable outlay, and on the whole she was kind, even to the point of looking at every new bit of "trumpery" which his genius produced, pointing out its prominent defects with a hair-pin, and occasionally—very occasionally, when the lodgers were out and the kitchen was tidy—giving a grunt of qualified admiration.

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Mrs. Nodder was not Fairfax's landlady. She lived next door but one, and slightly resented the attractions—not to say allurement into idleness and folly—which No. 9 possessed for Tom, to the disparagement of No. 7, where he might have cultivated the society under her own roof of two eminently respectable and punctually paying lodgers —Mr. Patterwell, the curate of the great grim, black church opposite, and "a scientific dressmaker" who "gave lessons."

Tom's mother, Mrs. Brown, had "died on Mrs. Nodder's hands" about three years ago after a sudden and short illness. She had given singing and dancing lessons "as per advertisement," and it was said matrimonial introductions, from which she was supposed to have made a good deal of money, without advertisements. She had been a clever woman, with a large share of good looks, high spirits, and much pride of deportment.

She had paid Mrs. Nodder well for her two large rooms, which she could throw into one, and a bedroom; and besides living well, for which Mrs. Nodder naturally admired her, she used to drop many hints, not obscure ones, about her "high descent," and the day that would see her again restored to her proper sphere—hints which, *not* accompanying poor living and deferred reckonings, did not arouse Mrs. Nodder's disdain.

However, death came instead, suddenly and yet insidiously. Is not that a most pathetically sudden death when a young woman who was dancing three days ago says, "I think I am better to-night; my cough is gone, and I am very drowsy," then slips into unconsciousness

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and dies—dies just then, though she may breathe and toss and talk for two or three more days?

So Mrs. Brown died and left Tom and two or three trifling effects and ten pounds or so; and Mrs. Nodder took to the lot, pending arrangements; and very soon found that arrangements (wholly self-acting) had disposed of everything but Tom, a little writing-desk, containing nothing which she could sell, and the picture of her late lodger, on the back of which she munificently inscribed Tom's name, and hung it over his bed.

Mr. Patterwell, the curate, once informed her that for such a picture, though it was only eighteen inches by twelve, signed by such a name, any picture-dealer would give her fifty pounds, upon which Mrs. Nodder laconically replied that "picture-dealers must have more money than brains." And when Tom triumphantly brought Mr. Fairfax's confirmation of the curate's statement, Mrs. Nodder rubbed the picture with her apron, held it at arm's-length, grunted, looked at Tom's name on the back, and then returned it to the boy with the remark that "she wished it had only been his aunt."

In the writing-desk Mrs. Nodder had discovered, among a mass of receipted bills and some old letters—which she had found it too much trouble in her busy days to read—the register of Tom's birth, which pleased her greatly, removing some lingering doubts of her late lodger's perfect respectability, and even lending some faint coloring to the hints which she had dropped touching her high descent.

Mrs. Brown's maiden name had been Violet Gladys

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Vaughan, and she had condescended to marry a Mr. Henry Brown, who had styled himself "gentleman"—which Mrs. Nodder, with her experience of lodgers who bore no other distinction, considered was equivalent to scamp—and so, naturally, she concluded poor Violet Gladys Vaughan, a high-born maiden, had come to giving dancing lessons, and otherwise suffering for her sins. She sought no clue in the register to Tom's enigmatical signature, and it is not likely that she would have found one if she had. She only found what she looked for, and was glad to find—that Tom had been born in wedlock.

But to return to the first-floor gentleman of No. 9. Fairfax sat motionless in his chair for a long time, as if asleep. He was not asleep—only dreaming—a vivid dream which he never forgot. It was a panorama of the brightest year of his life—his matured life—when he had painted his way through Switzerland—not on the highway of wealthy tourists, but among the Swiss, in places where life went on tranquilly and tunefully, day by day—tranquilly and tunefully, without the aid of the ever-climbing English and omni-seeing Americans.

As he sat with his eyes closed—wisely closed—before his rejected picture, the bright bracing memories of that romantic year came back to him in troops.

He had fallen in love on the shore of Lake Leman with a wilful, pretty little maiden who was earning her own living by teaching English in a Swiss school. He had painted her portrait as she appeared to him—taking little stolen sketches in the *salon* and the garden of the *pension*

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where they lived—and he had worshipped her for a month.

Then they separated, and soon after she wrote to him on the advisability of their "being friends." And that was the end of it (for she was then doubtless in love once more), save that there is no end to the dreams of youth—they color all one's life, if it has any color.

Her face came back to Fairfax now only as the sweetest memory of that memory-haunted year. Oh, how he wished himself out there once more in that bright still land of his dreams!

There he could breathe in youth and hope and vigor again; and whistle and paint his way from *châlet* to *châlet*, and *pension* to *pension*, all on two guineas a week or less, if only he could have Tom with him; and Tom belonged to nobody. And it might have been done. He *could* paint. He had the stuff in him to make an artist. But he had been idle just when he ought to have worked like a day-laborer—squandered money just when he ought to have saved it. And now it was an impossible dream. He had drifted on recklessly to the last—he had only twenty-five pounds left, and Tom! So black Barnfield had him fast.

"Too late!" he said aloud, opening his eyes again and looking with a weary look at the picture of Tom clasping his mother's portrait. "Too late!" he repeated, and at that moment the great mournful bell from the black tower opposite began to strike midnight. It sounded like the stroke of doom. He did not put his hands to his ears or stamp his foot now, as he so often had done, till the melan-

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choly monotonous clangs had ceased. He only shook his head abjectly and hopelessly, as if he acquiesced in the slowly uttered, mournful, unalterable sentence that the bell seemed to be passing upon him: "Too late, too late, too late!"

But George Fairfax's good angel had been very active that night; and there were other forces at work besides those conflicts of remorse and remembered hopes which were wringing his heart—blessed forces which we call chance. Chance! What is that? Our little coincidences, which may be God's great designs!

The dull reverberation of the twelfth dismal dong was just dying away when Fairfax started to hear a tapping at the window—a little cheerful tap which he knew very well, but had never heard before at twelve o'clock at night.

He literally jumped with joy, hurried to the window, and threw up the sash. Yes, it was Tom; but Fairfax's joy, though it still remained, had to give place also to a great deal of wonder and apprehension.

There the boy stood, in his best sailor suit and a cap, much the worse for wear, which did not match it. At his feet there was quite a little collection of miscellaneous property, including a pair of knickerbockers, an alarm-clock, and the portrait of his mother, valued at fifty pounds. Evidently these impedimenta had not been deposited there at the end of one journey from No. 7—a piece of reasoning made irrefragable by the boy's attitude and occupation when the window was opened.

He stood there proud and smiling, his eyes bright and his cheeks glowing, holding a little ugly four-months'-old

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cur under his left arm, while he used his right hand as a closely fitting muzzle, to the perceptible discomfort of the pup, as witnessed by his spasmodic and labored breathing.

"God bless you, my boy! What——"

"Hush, Mr. Fairfax—just lift those things in; he might bark. I'm going to seek my fortune!"

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CHAPTER II

A BRIGHT IDEA

Tom's things had been "lifted in." The window was closed, and Wag, with a most demonstrative tail but discreet tongue, was making himself happy in his new quarters, where he was by no means a stranger.

Tom was still standing by the window in the midst of his belongings, with his cap in his hand, holding up a bright proud face to Mr. Fairfax, who looked down on him with mingled consternation, pride, and love.

"Now, then, sir," he said with mock severity, "begin again."

"Well, you know, Mr. Fairfax, I was ten years old last week; and I'm a big boy for my age, and I can ride Captain, and he is sixteen hands. Mr. Robbins says I should very soon be fit to take his place. But, of course, delivering beer-barrels wouldn't do for a gentleman—at least not to keep on doing it."

"No, it wouldn't, Tom; and I thought you had a standing quarrel with beer."

"Not in barrels. Johnny Gubbs would only like the chance to ride and drive Captain, and it's that that vexes him. But you know I told you that I would not go on fetching Mr. Patterwell's beer in a jug. It isn't a gentlemanly thing to do. And I've done it for the last time, Mr.

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Fairfax. If I was a clergyman, and wanted beer in a jug, and Mrs. Nodder was too busy to fetch it, I'd go myself. Johnny Gubbs wouldn't call names after *him;* but he won't call 'Barty' after me again. Oh, you must try to see him to-morrow, Mr. Fairfax. He is a sight, but I hope information won't set in, because I don't dislike his mother, and doctors are very expensive, aren't they?"

"You walloped him, Tom?"

"I broke the jug on his head and nearly drowned him. That's it. That's why I'm here on the stroke of twelve. Mrs. Nodder beat me with the toasting-fork, and Mr. Diggle, who was in the kitchen, called me a providence brat. He called me a brat, Mr. Fairfax, and Mrs. Nodder *is* going to marry him, and I've left their roof forever."

"Well, you know, Tom," said George Fairfax, looking with more and more admiration at his little friend, but seeming between times to be thinking of other things, not disagreeable, "it was very hard lines on Mrs. Nodder. Why didn't you put the jug down and punch Johnny Gubbs's head with your fists? I think you could wallop him."

"Yes, I ought to have done, though he's bigger than me, and kicks, and has brass tips on his boots, and he is no gentleman! But I didn't think of it, and it doesn't matter, and I'm very glad. I'm glad I broke that jug of beer on Johnny Gubbs's head, and told Mr. Diggle he was a fat, idle man, and had set Mrs. Nodder against me. For you've heard, Mr. Fairfax, that a straw shows which way the wind blows, and that jug of beer just showed which way things have been blowing with me. And they couldn't

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go on any longer, not if I am to remember—what you teach me every day—that I'm to be a gentleman. No gentleman would stand that!"

"Well, yes, Tom. And what are you going to do?"

"Oh, I've often thought of that. When I grow up, I'm going to be an artist; but to begin with, I'm going to ride one of those tramway horses. They have saddles, you know, for going up Champs Hill. It's three miles from here, and I shall change my name, and Mrs. Nodder will never find me, though I don't suppose she'll look. The boys who ride them are no bigger than me. Don't you think they'll take me?"

"I'm afraid not. And where do you think of sleeping?"

"In the hay-loft, if they'll let me. A good groom, you know, ought always to be near his horse, for they sometimes hurt themselves in the night. Oh, I think they'll take me when they've seen me ride. I sha'n't funk any horse they offer me—not if he's never been broken, Mr. Fairfax!"

"I fancy they are all broken, Tom—at the knees. But the case looks rather difficult to me. When do you think of applying for the post?"

Tom gave a little hurried laugh at his friend's joke, but he was too much in earnest to enjoy it.

"Oh, I'll tell you! I haven't set off on a wild-goose-chase, and was so glad you hadn't gone to bed, as you sometimes do; or I should have had to wake you up, and you might have thought me a burglar, coming to that window. I knew you'd let me sleep here till daybreak,

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and hide some of my things. Then I thought you would let me out, and I shall get down to the tramway stables at six o'clock—and of course I wanted to see you—and we shall have to meet somewhere every week. Oh, if I had thought I couldn't see you any more, I think I would have put up with Mr. Diggle, but it might have ended in my killing Johnny Gubbs."

"Very well, Tom," said Mr. Fairfax with composure equal to Tom's, and with a glance at his rejected picture, and a flitting dream as wild and beautiful and romantic as Tom's was; "you shall certainly stay here until morning, and we'll see what can be done. But I'm afraid you are hardly doing the square thing by Mrs. Nodder. She is a good soul, though a bit crabby, and she has done a lot for you, and I suspect she is pretty fond of you, though she doesn't take much pride in your water-color drawings certainly, and would rather like you to let Captain down and break his knees, and transfer your attention from John Robbins's occupation to your sums and spelling-book. Isn't that it, Tom? She's not unkind?"

"Oh, no! I'm very fond of Mrs. Nodder, and I've left a letter for her, and put it in the drawer where the key of the clock is. She'll find it on Saturday—day after to-morrow—and I've told her that I love her, and that I shall always write to her, and that I'm not a bit vexed; but I'm going to seek my fortune. But I did say that I still thought Mr. Diggle was a fat, idle man, and that he only wanted to come and live in our kitchen, and be always eating nice things, and I advised her not to marry him, whatever Mr. Patterwell might say to her, because

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Mr. Patterwell only saw people as they are on Sunday; and he called me a providence brat—Mr. Diggle."

"And very good advice it was, Tom. Why, you are quite a man of the world. But for all that, the Barnfield Tramway Co. won't give you the post. No, not if you take your own horse and saddle!"

Tom looked alarmed, glanced down at his belongings, and then assumed an air of calm determination.

"Then I'll go down to the canal wharf and be a cabin-boy. But why? I can ride, and I'd rather have to do with horses than ships; and those ships are very dirty, and those that are pulled by horses only walk."

"It would be just the same, Tom; the law of England decrees that you shall go to school until you're twelve."

Tom's jaw dropped.

"What! When I'm my own master—and—and I've taken a prize every breaking-up day since—since I was a very little boy—there they are, see!" Tom pointed to his chattels by the window.

Fairfax nodded.

"It makes no difference."

"Then the law of England is very cruel, and Mr. Bocking is quite right; the School-Board is an abonimation, though they don't use the cane so much as he does, and Mrs. Nodder pays him ten shillings a quarter. I shall give her that back some day. I told her so in my letter. Mr. Fairfax, I shall have to think it all over again—how to begin. Will you—would you mind giving me one or two of your biscuits? I—I begin to feel very hungry."

Mr. Fairfax laughed; he laughed heartily. His spirits

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were rising; they were leaping up as the mercury will leap up in stormy weather. He was in a stormy and wild mood that night, and just at this moment his spirits were wildly buoyant. His own dream—mad and child-like it might be also—was expanding every second, and taking to itself all the colors from the purple sunset of a vanished day. It was very beautiful while it lasted, and "the law of England" could not meddle with that.

Tom looked at him with some astonishment, far from laughing, but he showed no resentment further than by remarking that "lying awake without any supper made people hungry," and he accompanied his friend to the well-known cupboard, and facilitated matters by helping himself to biscuits and figs. He also gave Wag a crumb,—which required two bites,—for Wag had made himself one of the foraging party, and had his nose in the cupboard first of all, though he seemed to be fast asleep when biscuits were mentioned.

Tom did all this in a gentlemanly way, but it was certainly the way of a gentleman in his own house. And he went to the extent of suggesting, by a series of signs, for he knew it was rude to talk with his mouth full, that Mr. Fairfax should make free use of the decanters, which were not in Tom's line, and any thing else that he wanted.

So the three of them regaled themselves, mostly in silence, and Tom went on "thinking," only making such remarks when he threw half a biscuit to the pup, or made a dive for another fig, as that "it wanted a long time to daybreak," and that "Mrs. Nodder slept very soundly," and that "where there was a will there was a way."

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As for Fairfax, he simply looked on as one infatuated with a charming play. Verily "a little child shall lead them," and that intrepid, calm-minded little fellow was then leading George Fairfax into a paradise, whether it proved to be a fool's paradise or not.

"Tom," he said at last, when Tom had put his hands into his pockets, satisfied, and was staring with heavy eyelids at the lowered biscuit-tin in a drowsy posture which showed that the laws of nature would require some circumventing as well as the laws of England, "are you going to sleep?"

"To sleep? no!" Tom jumped up and walked about the room, administering some sharp nips to his legs by way of a pick-me-up. "I'm thinking—how to begin, you know. What time is it, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Quarter-past one. And you must think quickly, for I've a lot to do!"

"A lot to do? You haven't done anything for a week or more. Am I—am I keeping you up, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Yes, my boy, you *are* keeping me up, and before you came I was lower down in the deep dark blues than I've ever been in my life."

Tom stared. Being sleepy, or troubled, or particularly business-like, he did not quite grasp the compliment.

"The fact of it is, Tom—it's a strange thing—but *I'm* thinking of running away too—to seek *my* fortune!"

Tom had no more need to pinch his legs. His blue frank eyes opened to their fullest width, beautiful with wonder.

"Where—when?"

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"Oh, far away, over the hills and over the sea, where the sun shines every day; where the cows and horses have bells on, and the meadows have no walls, and the houses are covered with vines; where people laugh, and there is no dirt, no iron, no coal, no rich people, and no Royal Academy! I'm going to-morrow morning!"

Tom had come close up to Mr. Fairfax, and was gazing into his face with rapt attention, but when he heard the words "to-morrow morning" he started back. The flush that had come into his face died down, the tears sprang to his eyes, and his little, beautiful, full, firm lips began to twitch.

"And leave me, Mr. Fairfax?"

"You must go back, Tom."

Tom brushed his hand fiercely across his face, and put it behind him to hide the tear-drops. Then he bit his lip and swallowed the lump in his throat.

"No; not to Mr. Diggle and Mr. Patterwell's beer. I'm going to run away and seek my fortune. But I've told Mrs. Nodder I love her, and I shall write to her."

"Where shall you go, Tom?" asked Mr. Fairfax with a quiet—and Tom thought a cutting—voice.

A wonderful flash shot into the boy's face, and he set his lips so close they almost seemed to curl.

"Into the dirt and coal and iron and rich people. I'll sell matches and half-penny papers. The law of England can't stop *that*. But, oh, Mr. Fairfax,"—his voice lost its strange hardness,—"I—I never thought"—the tears came and Tom let them fall now—"that you—that you—would

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want to be where people are always laughing—without—without *me*."

"My boy,"—Fairfax had lifted Tom clean up from the ground, and was hugging him,—"it was a joke, a cruel joke, and I'll never do it again. Without you? Why, it's just you who have made me determined to go to-morrow. I'm going to break the law of England for you. I'm going to kidnap you, and rob Mrs. Nodder, and make you a great man, so that you can give her money, and punch Mr. Diggle, and pull Mr. Patterwell's nose if he sends for beer in a jug when you come back. Will you go?"

"Really and truly?" They were still hugging each other.

"To-morrow morning, Tom."

"Oh, Mr. Fairfax—oh, I say. I'll never say 'didn't ought' again, as long as I live. Why do you love me like that?"

George Fairfax made no direct answer to that question, and Tom did not seem to expect any. So they remained silent and satisfied, Tom resting his head on Fairfax's shoulder, with his hands just able to meet behind his back, apparently bent on squeezing him into the smallest possible compass.

For a long time Wag had been sitting up on his hind-legs, with his eyes on the biscuit-tin, as if all that had happened had been their part of the performance, leading up to the same climax—more biscuits. But at last he gave up in disgust, and came and put his different-colored paws on Fairfax's knees, and yawned. Then he shook

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his head and looked knowing; and then he actually barked.

"There, I told you!" cried Tom, jumping down. "That's what I was afraid of on the veranda. Oh, Mr. Fairfax, how shall we manage with him? The trains, you know—they won't have him in the tram-cars. I've found that out."

Fairfax looked at the pup and looked at his master. Here was a new question, and he wanted no more jokes, so he said gravely:

"I don't think we can possibly take Wag, Tom; we are going five hundred miles by trains, ships, and coaches, to the middle of Switzerland, by degrees."

Tom also grew more grave, and said:

"He's mine, Mr. Fairfax, all mine, and I saved him from drowning. It isn't—it isn't as if he were mine and Mrs. Nodder's. She says he is an ugly, expensive little mongrel; and Mr. Patterwell won't let him go inside his room, and what would he do? He is only a puppy, you know."

Fairfax perceived clearly that Mrs. Nodder had estimated Wag fairly, and could not justly feel angry even with the curate. But he saw also that Tom loved it with the love of one creature who has saved the life of another. Meanwhile Tom saw that he had made a point.

"He's not handsome, not yet; but look, Mr. Fairfax, look!" He made a plunge, seized Wag, and held him out at arm's length by the tail, where he revolved without a moan, like a hare on a spit. "There! that shows his breed."

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If it did, Fairfax was unable to give a name to it; and he knew most breeds which are seen in England.

"And he doesn't eat much, not to say that he's growing; and he's not a bit particular,"—as Wag at that moment was licking the blacking off George's boots, he could not challenge this statement,—"and he's nobody, nobody in the wide world but me; and, oh, Mr. Fairfax, I'm afraid, I'm very much afraid, I shouldn't be able to laugh if I had to leave him—and I shouldn't care a bit for the bells on the horses and cows. Won't you take him?"

"But the trains, Tom. What if we left him labelled, 'For Mr. Robbins, from his little friend Tom'? That would do, now."

Tom thought profoundly, then shook his head.

"No; Mr. Robbins is a kind man, and he keeps a bull-dog; but *he* says Wag is a mongrel—though, you know, he understands horses better than dogs—and Wag will be six months old very soon, and he wouldn't pay seven-and-sixpence a year for him, because he's not a fighting dog, and didn't worry a rat which Mr. Robbins caught, and *his* dog did. And Mr. Robbins never forgets an injury; he never does, Mr. Fairfax. He's not a bit like you, though he's been a very kind man to me."

"Well, I don't know, Tom. You wouldn't like him shot? He wouldn't feel it, you know—not that much! He would never know." And Fairfax just pinched Tom's cheek ever so lightly.

The tears sprang again into Tom's eyes.

"I know he wouldn't; I know he wouldn't, Mr. Fairfax; but *I* should—*I* should—*I* should!"

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This was philosophy, logic, eloquence, and Fairfax was floored. So they both relapsed into silent thought, both looking at the piebald, broken-haired pup, who now sat with his black ear up and his white down, as if listening to the case with the utmost confidence in his counsel, and a smug-like consciousness of his own worth and integrity.

Then Tom broke the silence again with a radiant face :

"I've thought of it, Mr. Fairfax!"

"Well?" George looked up, thankful and approving; any disposal of Wag would suit him if it suited Tom, whatever bonus he had to add in giving the pup away.

"I've thought of it, Mr. Fairfax. It's my own idea."

"Well?"

"We'll put him in a hamper, with lots of things to eat; we'll give him some water every time we stop, and walk him up and down, because his legs will get stiff; and then the porters can't say any thing. He won't be a bit of trouble to any body, will he?"

Fairfax gave it up. The pup would have to go; so he laughed.

"Well, he will be a little trouble to *us*, Tom, if we stop often."

"Oh, no; I shall like it. Now, all we want is a hamper —a big one. You will see, Mr. Fairfax, that Wag will bring us good luck. See where he's gone; he knows they're mine!"

Wag, already taking the case as ended in his favor, had gone and curled himself up on one of Tom's garments, with his nose on the open leaf of one of Tom's prizes, and his black ear, the one that always stood up, close to the

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alarm-clock—as if to show that he knew of the surprises and vicissitudes that would beset his new career, and that he was equal to them.

"Very well, Tom; then he must go. Is this your whole kit?" He turned them over, and Wag groaned—the effect of his late supper—but Tom pointed triumphantly as if it were a sign that he was guarding the property.

"Yes, at least that's all I could get at. I've got my nightgown on—I'm very hot—and Mrs. Nodder keeps my best cap in her bonnet-box; and my best top is at the wash."

"Your what?"

"This!" Tom fingered his upper outer garment, which would have gone into a man's coat-pocket. "They call them tops."

"And your shirts?"

"I haven't any shirts. I've these!" And this time Tom went below the surface and pulled out a part of something that was white and flannelly. "They are all in one, you know," and he patted himself all over, from his chest downward to his knees. "They'll be very convenient for travelling—I can't lose one part without the other. This is loose, you know," and once again he gave a practical demonstration of his meaning. "This is the collar which Mrs. Nodder says costs so much in washing, and which you make me change so often. Those are Wag's footmarks, that is some of Mr. Patterwell's beer, when I broke the jug, and that is saddle-soap; but I shall try to keep them cleaner. I put this on this morning."

"Oh! Then I think in future we'll go in for two a day, Tom, and hang expense!"

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Tom started, then laughed, and then looked grave.

"I'm afraid I shall be a great expense to you, Mr. Fairfax. You—you—you are always dressed so beautifully."

Fairfax laughed too.

"Your wardrobe won't break us, Tom. In London—we shall go there first—we will fix you up with all you want, and about a dozen extra tops—I mean collars—if that's a specimen of one day's wear. And now to business—that means to bed for you. Come on."

"But the packing, Mr. Fairfax—all your packing?"

"That will be done. I'll call you at six o'clock."

"I shall not go to sleep; let me help you. And the hamper?"

"We will get that to-morrow. At six o'clock you will set off with Wag under your arm. Stick fast to him. At seven I shall leave here in a cab, with your things and mine. I shall stop at the parish church gates for you. If you are not there, why, I shall drive straight back, and we shall have to think it all out again, Tom, how to begin, and have a great fight with Mrs. Nodder, and Mr. Diggle, and the curate, and every-body."

"I shall be there," said Tom, with beaming eyes; "and so will Wag—won't you, Wag? Oh, Mr. Fairfax, I wish it was six o'clock!"

"And I shall write a little note to Mrs. Nodder, Tom."

"Do, and say I love her, and that I am not vexed, and that I shall send her my first earnings. You won't mind, Mr. Fairfax—and—shall I forgive Mr. Diggle? What do you think?"

"What do *you* think, Tom?"

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"I might say I am very sorry for calling him fat, because he can't help it, and I don't want to vex him now, because I am so very happy; but I won't say I'm sorry for calling him idle, because he is, and I don't want Mrs. Nodder to marry him."

"Well, you can think about it and write yourself."

"Oh, yes! I shall write every week. Oh, I feel very happy, and, Mr. Fairfax——" Tom had assumed a solemn and commanding tone.

"Yes?"

"This is not chance."

"No?"

"No; because—because there is no chance, except of course in games."

"Then what is it, Tom?"

"Well, it's very hard to explain it, but it is not chance. Now look at that picture, that beautiful picture! You must take it with you."

"I shall, Tom."

"It makes you hate the Academy?"

"It does."

"And I don't like Mr. Bocking's Academy. Just now, when I think of being caught before we get off, why, I hate it."

"Well?"

"And you have loved me for two years, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"And I have loved you for two years—you will never know how much; and I am painted in that picture, which

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you said—every day you used to say—it will make your fortune; and it will, I know it will!"

"Well?"

"And you and I were going to run away the very same day to find our fortunes?"

"Yes."

"Well, what does all that mean, Mr. Fairfax?"

"What do you think it means, Tom?"

"Why, it means as plain as plain that we shall never, never, never be parted, doesn't it?"

"I think it does, Tom."

"Very well, then," said Tom, looking up from between Mr. Fairfax's knees into his face with loving eyes; "then I have proved to you, haven't I, once for all, that there is no chance?"

"Yes, I think you have, Tom." He pressed the boy closer to him and spoke to himself. "You have proved to me that the last little bit of lurid light, flickering out in eternal blackness, as we think, may be the finger of God lighting another day."

"What? That is very beautiful, Mr. Fairfax, but——"

He put both his hands now over Tom's ears, pressed them close, and muttered:

"I hope He'll forgive me for not stopping to argue the case out with Mrs. Nodder, and purloining those tops."

"What did you say? You closed my ears."

"I said you were a bold young scamp, and I wouldn't give you up if they sent me to prison. Now, right about face! Quick march!"

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CHAPTER III

GOOD-BY, BLACK BARNFIELD!

HALF-AN-HOUR after that Tom was as sound asleep as the black church-tower over the way; and the bell that boomed out the hours in stern, solemn warning no more disturbed the repose of one than of the other. Tom was riding Captain over the mountains of Switzerland, and cleaning Mr. Fairfax's palette in the Tramway Co.'s stables; and George Fairfax was packing up—an easy task, for during the previous twenty-four hours at least he had been setting his things in order for a very much longer journey.

And at breakfast-time, when Mrs. Nodder was expecting Tom—he was an early riser, and habitually watched Captain eating his morning oats—Fairfax's landlady stepped on to No. 7 with a receipted bill (paid early the night before), and a letter for Mrs. Nodder in her hand, and a woful tale of rooms to let on her lips.

And here might follow a long chapter exclusively devoted to those two estimable women, as they figured in Mrs. Nodder's neglected kitchen, on opposite sides of a cold teapot and a big pile of bread and butter, which made Mrs. Nodder wipe her eyes with her apron every time she looked at it.

It would be a curious chapter, very instructive, if prop-

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erly treated. There were wringing of hands and shaking of fists, allusions to the police and prognostications of a returning millionaire, sighs, snifflings, anathemas, and hopes to be forgiven for all one had done amiss, which Mr. Patterwell's "exasperative ways" would have to answer for. The cruel and useless regret that "a good-for-nothin' artist hadn't hung hisself" was coupled with the practical determination to "pour scaldin' water" on a certain Mr. Diggle the next time he showed his face.

The Mr. Patterwell already alluded to was informed through the ceiling and two closed doors that he would have to go without his breakfast, and he could leave to-morrow "if he wanted." And then "all artists and painter chaps" were solemnly warned that if they ever applied for rooms at No. 9 they would get the door slammed in their faces. Then there was a great scuffling to get hot plates, and to toast bacon, and boil eggs—a kind-faced woman, who didn't "know where to find things," running against a rather sour-faced woman, who was putting coffee into a teapot, and telling her not to "take on" any more; the sour-faced woman saying "it didn't matter—nothin' mattered" (with reference to the tea and coffee), "and she wouldn't have cared if they hadn't gone and run away just as if they was frightened of her, who wouldn't hurt a fly, though she did sometimes speak sharply, havin' pains in her vitals."

Finally there were two neighborly women, communicative and rather romantically inclined, indulging in a second breakfast, and consoling themselves for the scarcity of cream by the use of a little gin.

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Lodging-house keepers were commiserated in general; and lodgers were assumed to be naturally an objectionable and exasperating class. But the world was still held to be bearable, even with the race of lodging-house keepers and lodgers as it then was; and there were surmises, innumerable and bewildering, of what it might come to be—that world of four persons (only a slightly undersized world for most of us)—"when them two came back."

That is a syllabus of the chapter which might have been written; but all those things belong to the history of Barnfield, and George Fairfax and Tom had now left Barnfield far behind them.

They might find a better place; but they would never find any place to touch Barnfield for its own product. Gold! gold smelted from coal and iron. There are mints of gold in Barnfield. Men's pockets bulge with gold; women's arms and necks and fingers are wreathed and riveted with gold; the rooms of their houses are papered, their ceilings are pencilled, and their furniture inlaid with gold.

The gates of the mansions where they live are spotted and splashed with gold, and when they die the epitaphs on their great tombstones are written in letters of gold.

Their talk is of gold and of politics, to which they can only contribute gold; and of religion on Sundays, which to them leads only to streets and harps and crowns of gold. Their standard is gold, and their weights and measures, with which they weigh and measure everything in earth and what they think is in heaven, are gold. They are one mass of gold, but it is aluminium.

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Of the pure eternal ore which shines out from the ruins of the ages, the gold which History uses for her initial letters, with which Story gilds her pictured pages, which makes the crowns of immortal heroes, and the sceptres of kings which cannot be dethroned nor die—of that gold Barnfield scarcely ever beats out a thread now as fine as a woman's hair.

In days gone by Barnfield did produce some of that gold. But her children have quite forgotten what was made of it elsewhere. And if a stranger informed them that it went into the works of a couple of poets, of a painter, a sculptor, and a musician, they would ask, or be inclined to ask, "what the lot fetched."

Oh, Barnfield! Is there another city in Europe that digs three hundred thousand graves every generation, and never plucks a flower for her breast from one?

Is there one other old town in the world, with hundreds and hundreds of miles of toil-worn, ugly, lie-placarded streets, without a monument, an image, a tablet to one of her dead sons?

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CHAPTER IV

FROM FOREIGN PARTS

THE spelling of the following letter, no less than that of the previous and following pages, has been rigorously corrected for publication:

"LE BOSQUET, NEUVILLE, CANTON VAUD,
"LA SUISSE, June 19, 188–.

"MY VERY DEAR MRS. NODDER:

"We have now been on our travels for more than one month. We have left St. Jean behind us. The postage will still be twopence half-penny. You were very kind to send me the *St. Philip's Magazine*, with Mr. Patterwell's poetry and your love. I am glad you still love me. I do not think Mr. Patterwell will grow a great man, but we can all be good men, if we try very hard, like Mr. Fairfax. Mr. Fairfax will some day be the greatest man that I have ever known. He never says an unkind word, and he sends you his compliments.

"I now know what fame is. In St. Jean there was not one person who did not know us. And Mr. Fairfax painted two of their houses, which they call *maisons*, and many of their faces, which I do not know the name of in French.

"The poor men in Neuville are all dressed in blue, like

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butchers, with wide trousers, and are all polite, just as they were in St. Jean.

"Wag is very well; he has grown, and you cannot now see his ribs quite so plainly. We have brought his kennel from St. Jean. I filled it with boots and things. It is in the garden, close to two beautiful little pigs, which live in a big wooden house (and it does not smell), and they are all happy. He is not much trouble now. At St. Jean we lost him, but the people found him. They say they never saw any dog at all like him in their lives; they say he is very valuable, and they do not laugh at him. And nobody has stolen him, although he goes into their doors, which are always open, and nearly always green, and covered with vines. The people stand and sit on the causeway.

"Le Bosquet is very beautiful. It is green and white, and the roof is red. There is a fountain. It is very famous, and all the poor people come and fill their bottles if any body is ill, or if they like it. I do not like it; it smells of bad eggs; and there is a gentleman in the house who is very ill, and he has been all over the world, and he is stopping here a long time to drink it. I have not seen him, because he is in bed. His wife is the most beautiful lady I have ever seen except my mother. Her name is Madame Baronne.

"To-day I spoke to her in French. I said it was a fine day. But I do not know what she said to me until she saw that I could understand English. Then she asked me if I would go with her into the town some day. So I am going. That is the bell for *déjeûner*, so I must stop.

. . . . .

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"I commence once more. I am getting fond of Le Bosquet. This morning I gave Madame Baronne a rose, and she gave me a kiss; but I shall never forget you, dear Mrs. Nodder. Madame Baronne is very sad, and I am sure she is good. She is English, and no one else is except her maid. But her maid does not like Wag, and I do not like her. There are no tourists at Neuville. That is why we are here.

"Tourists are all rich. They never stop anywhere, and they do not know any thing. They ask many questions when they are not eating or saying where they have been. It is supposed they will some day ruin Switzerland, but I do not know how, and I do not see any harm in them. They are all beautifully dressed, and some of them are very kind when they are not rude. All tourists are English except Americans; they are richer than the English, but not so proud, and the poor people like them better, and I think I do. They do know something; they know a great deal. It is supposed that all American tourists have saved up a million pounds, and have been poor boys. The American young ladies were all kind to me, and so were the English, though some of their mammas were not. One hit Wag very hard with a long parasol, which they carry upside down, because he had bitten a hole in it. I cannot write any more to-day, because I have to do my lessons. I like to eat the hind-legs of frogs when I shut my eyes. *Au revoir.* That means a little good-by.

. . . . .

"I take up my pen once more. It is a beautiful day. Madame Bonjour—she is our landlady—has given me a

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little garden, and she has given Mr. Fairfax a studio—a beautiful little room at the very top of the *pension*, with nothing in it. There are fifteen people in the *pension*. It will hold thirty. They are all French, and drink the water, and take baths, and are massaged. I like most of them, and some of them like me.

"Madame Baronne gave me another kiss this morning. Her husband had had a better night. She is very sad and very beautiful.

"Mr. Fairfax is going to paint Le Bosquet. The landlady is going to give him twenty francs. We shall soon be famous here also.

"They have promised to take me at the school as soon as I can speak French enough. The school is the beautiful old castle, called the Château de Neuville. It is a thousand years old. It is where the great Pestalozzi used to teach his little children. I love the great Pestalozzi, but he is dead. I think he was very much like Mr. Fairfax. His crest was this: 'I lived like a beggar that I might teach beggars to live like men.' He used to give away his coats and things. Now every-body in Europe knows him. He is famous, though he is dead.

"Fame is not all nice. Mr. Fairfax has to work very hard, but he always plays with me.

"Please tell Mr. Robbins I have been on a Swiss war-horse. He will be pleased to learn that it was seven years old, and I guessed it was eight, so that I was very near. Please tell him that the black holes in his two front teeth were all white, and had gone. He will understand, and he

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will be pleased. I shall try to remember all the other things that he taught me.

"The Swiss are a brave people. I like the Swiss. They look beautiful in pictures. They make a great deal of condensed milk and watches. They are now at peace. It is supposed they will be at peace while we are here. The horse I rode works in the fields for its master, who is a soldier, when it is not at war.

"Now I think I have told you every thing, except that I have had another long talk with Mr. Fairfax about 'chance.' I think now there may be *some* chance. Just a little, but not enough to do any harm. I will tell you what chance is another time. I have almost made up my mind, but I must first tell Mr. Fairfax.

"I am writing this in our studio. The sun is going to set on the Juras. They are blue and beautiful. I can see the lake. It is called Neuchâtel. I like to look at it. It is also blue. The sunshine feels very beautiful. I am going to be famous, and a good man. Good-by, dear Mrs. Nodder. I shall always love you, whether you are good to me or not; because that is what God does. Mr. Fairfax told me that. But Mr. Patterwell used to say that God would take care of us, and people would love us if we were good. But often we are bad. And when we are very good we are very happy, and we do not want any body to love us at all.

"I send you a photograph of Neuville, and I have put a cross over Le Bosquet, so that you can think better of me. I am to give up wearing sailor suits, because there is no sea in Switzerland, and I have grown. I hope Mr. Patter-

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well has begun to drink bottled beer. Please give him my compliments, and my very kind regards to Miss Short. When I come back, perhaps I shall be famous for something. The rich people of Barnfield are not famous for any thing, except for their knives, which are made by poor people. Their knives are very good. But I do not care for all their big houses, except one, which I should like to give to Mr. Fairfax. He does not love the rich people of Barnfield; but he does not prevent me, and I pray for them every night. If they had known him, they would have loved him; but it was their fault. In St. Jean every-body knew him; and every-body loved him. That is the nice thing in fame.

"I have the honor to describe myself,

"Your humble, obedient,

"Loving little friend,

"TOM BART BROWN."

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CHAPTER V

"MY FRIEND, MADAME BARONNE"

THE English lady whom Tom had fallen in love with—Madame Baronne, as she was styled in Neuville—was sitting on an awning-covered bench in a little plot shut in by rose-trees, and approached by descending steps from the terrace in front of Le Bosquet.

This plot, always fragrant and shady, was only one of many pleasant nooks in the big rambling garden with its flower-bordered paths—narrow winding walks which ran out of the wide terrace in front of the house, and lost themselves in unexpected alcoves.

Le Bosquet was a picturesque house with a red-tiled roof of varying heights and many gables. Its yellow walls were dotted with awning-roofed, green-shuttered windows, and its ever-open door was half hidden in vine-leaves.

Beyond the house, at the very end of the broad red terrace, under a group of towering chestnut-trees, stood the far-famed fountain, which was for the healing of the nations, free. On a near approach one certainly sniffed something in the air akin to "bad eggs." But that odor did not reach the house; moreover, it was said to be healthful, and the very sight and sound of that free running elixir was healing to many.

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It fell with a trickling, plashing music out of a quaint spout in the ivied wall into a semi-circular basin of rough-hewn stones; and then purled over the channelled rim into a pebbly, ferny stream, and murmured itself away to the lowest monotone underground.

Many a desponding soul had drunk thereat, and talked to the blue-bloused peasant (filling a bottle for his sick child), and believed in the wonderful cures, and got quite well, when perchance the same traveller had elbowed his way, many a time, to the most famous springs in the world, and drunk his tumblerful and paid for it down on the nail, and felt very much worse.

Madame Baronne knew that the quiet waters of Neuville were better than the Pharpars and Abanas of Europe. True, they had not wrought the cure for which her husband had sought them, who, as Tom put it, had "travelled all over the world, and had come there to drink a lot." But, notwithstanding that he was temporarily confined to his room again, he had profited greatly from his sojourn in Neuville, and his wife had derived great advantage also. She had found some degree of rest and forgetfulness, and possibly, just possibly, some faint little hope for her husband's recovery.

The primary malady from which Madame Baronne's husband suffered was excessive drinking, but it was the gout which at present confined him to his room, aggravated by some general symptoms of what is called "breaking up."

His constitution was tottering. In short, he was a wreck, though apparently, just at times, a rather well-pre-

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served one. Of course after every fresh assault the cracks in the tumbling fabric gaped more; the green creepers which were carefully trained to cover them hung more loosely: and now generally, between the brief periods for "repairing," the once finely built and handsome man looked patchy and broken down.

Still his wife loved him, or thought she did, because she had once loved him and believed in him; and ever since she had married him she had had to lead him by the hand —so far as he would be led.

The sense of protecting is akin to the sense of loving. It is next door to it, and in some natures—the best—the distinction between the two gets lost.

But as Tom had clearly perceived and remarked without qualifications, Madame Baronne was very sad. She was also, as Tom averred with equal accuracy, very beautiful. She was clearly under thirty years of age, perhaps only twenty-six; but care and pain had taken the place of years in all that matures the heart and models the face—models it sometimes into greater beauty, or at least greater attractiveness, which is the same thing to those attracted, the canons of art being the conflicts of artists.

Madame Baronne had rich flaxen hair. She had a pale, slightly pinkish face, with a richly colored mouth, full and firm, and almond-shaped, deep blue eyes, with lashes darker colored than her hair. Now it had become a melancholy face, when at rest, which gave to her smiles, which were rare, a singularly joyous effect.

But Madame Baronne's quietly beautiful face was not more noticeable than her quietly beautiful ways. Her

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movements were full of grace. She was tall, and moved about with an airy dignity of repose. She could not walk across a room, or lift up her head from a book, or hold out her hand for a flower without giving a long illustrated lecture, to any artist who happened to see her, on the secret of grace in motion.

In short, she was a beautiful woman with a calm visage and quiet ways, and won many hearts—notably Tom's—immediately they came under her influence.

Madame Baronne was sitting in her favorite nook among the roses when Tom came back from the town after posting his letter to Mrs. Nodder.

He was hurrying into the house to tell Mr. Fairfax it had cost fivepence when he stopped and turned round at the sound of his own name called out in a clear, sweet voice. Tom darted down the steps into the rose-garden.

"*Bonjour*, madame." He took off his cap and bowed in exact imitation of the politest man in St. Jean, who had happened to be the *propriétaire* of the *pension* where he had stayed, and whom Tom had studied with indefatigable perseverance. "I hope monsieur, your husband, has had a good night."

"Yes, Tom, he is a little better. Aren't you going to give me a kiss this morning?"

"Oh, yes, if you like. Should you like me to kiss you every morning without asking, just as if—as if you belonged to me?"

Tom had immediately complied with the request, and repeated the favor with a second bob of his curly round head against madame's, and a second little grin of satis-

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faction; and when he asked if the performance was to be in his daily programme he was looking into Madame Baronne's face with a meditative and speculative kind of joy.

"Why, yes, Tom. I don't get so many kisses, and we are going to be fast friends, are we not?" she answered, removing a ball of wool from the bench that Tom might sit down beside her, which he immediately did, locking his hands underneath him, and wriggling his curly head nearer and nearer till he finally rested it under Madame Baronne's chin, with his eyes fixed upon hers.

"Yes, I am very fond of you. I must show you the picture of my mother. I think your eyes are like hers, and your hair—— But it might not be polite to say that."

"What were you going to say, Tom?" Madame Baronne put down her work.

"Why, you know, you have a very beautiful face. Have you——" Tom stopped again, and the lady's face suddenly grew more beautiful, because she smiled.

"Well?"

"Has it been painted, Madame Baronne?"

"What?" She laughed, and looked quizzingly at Tom. "Do you mean made up—like—like an actress's?"

Tom did not completely grasp her meaning.

"No, not like an actress's; just as you are; it couldn't be better. And Mr. Fairfax would paint it beautifully for twenty francs. My mother's picture cost fifty pounds."

"Oh, now I understand you, Tom. So Mr. Fairfax is also a portrait-painter, is he? I saw his sketch of Le

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Bosquet yesterday; it was very pretty. But he didn't tell me he painted portraits."

"I should think he is. Why, he will some day be one of our greatest painters. Only he has left England because—because the Royal Academy would not buy his last great picture. But it will some day be a famous picture. It is me and my mother. Will you come and look at it, Madame Baronne?" and Tom sprang to his feet ready to lead the way.

"Now, do you mean? Where is it, Tom?"

"In our studio. It is hung on the wall. But we have not much other furniture yet. It is at the very top of the house. Mr. Fairfax is there now. I will show you the way."

"But he will be busy. I think, perhaps, some other time, Tom."

"Oh, no! It is *our* studio, mine and his. I paint there too. I am *learning* to be a great painter, and Mr. Fairfax has told me to bring any friend I like. At St. Jean I took the *facteur* and the *confiseur's* little girl. In St. Jean we painted a good many people—we were famous there. I wash the brushes and scrape the palettes and keep things straight, you know. Mr. Fairfax will be very pleased to see you."

So Madame Baronne wound up her wool, and then took the hand which Tom stretched out to her, which he did with every assurance and some impatience, and they entered the house together, and ascended the stairs.

"There are no carpets after this," said Tom on the second landing, "but you see there is a banister, and we

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are not in an attic. We have a beautiful view. Are you tired, Madame Baronne?"

Madame Baronne was pausing with her foot on the first uncarpeted stair, and her hand on the almost perpendicular rail, up to which stage Tom had dragged her with more urgency than the visit seemed to require.

"Oh, no, I am not tired." She smiled and looked round for the signs of a studio. "Suppose you go first and announce me."

"Oh, we are there now," and Tom bounded up the last resounding stairs and flung open the door.

"This is my friend, Madame Baronne, Mr. Fairfax. She has come to look at our studio, and at my mother and me!"

Fairfax had been very plainly warned of their approach, and was already in the doorway, palette in hand, when Tom bounded into the room.

"*Bonjour*, madame," said the artist, bowing to his visitor, and making room for her to pass in.

She entered the room with a radiant smile.

"Then I am really not intruding?"

"Not in the least," Fairfax answered, with a little laugh. "I am greatly honored, and more indebted to Tom than ever. This is our studio, as he says, and this is our visitor's chair, if you will kindly take it. If we are prosperous in Neuville, we may some day possess two."

Madame Baronne sat down in the cane-bottomed chair which Fairfax offered her, and laughed a little pleasant laugh which was almost merry.

"Well," she said, looking out at the lake and the moun-

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tains, "you have at least the finest view from Neuville; and that should be worth more than upholstery to an artist; and—well, you have a splendid light, and there is room *enough*, isn't there, Tom?"

Tom had planted himself at Madame Baronne's elbow and stood leaning against her, twisting a knot into the fringe of the silk scarf which she had carried in her hand from the garden. His attitude was one of careless proprietorship and suppressed joy at the treat he had yet in store for *his* visitor. His eyes had roved from Madame Baronne's scarf once or twice to the picture on the wall, with some signs of impatience.

"Yes," he answered, without laughing, "we have *plenty* of room. But Mr. Fairfax's studio in England was a very large one—it was the largest in the house, and it was full of beautiful things till the two men fetched them all away on a dray, when Mr. Fairfax had lost a lot of money. That is my mother and me, Madame Baronne! My mother, by herself, is in my bedroom. And that is our old studio, where I stand holding my mother's picture, and those are the two bailiffs. You see, they have taken nearly everything."

After this brief and hurried address, accompanied with sundry explanatory pointings on Tom's part, and a very patent suspense on the part of his audience, the three of them looked by turn in each other's faces with very varied expressions. Tom was the first to speak again with any particular purport.

"Perhaps I shouldn't have said all that, Mr. Fairfax. But, you know, Madame Baronne, it was not Mr. Fairfax's

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fault. And very great men are often very poor. Look at the great Pestalozzi, and—and look at the rich people of Barnfield."

As these opposite examples were not within sight, except through a dim perspective, Madame Baronne looked at the speaker, and at Mr. Fairfax, and at the picture on the wall, and judging from appearances was won over completely to Tom's side, and acquiesced in his views touching virtue and property. She seemed, moreover, to side with the artist as against the Academy, for the pleasure that rejected picture gave her was unmistakably shown in her face.

"It is a beautiful picture," she said. "Tom, you are a judge, I see. And it is a good subject. It did not need a description," she added, with a careless smile toward Mr. Fairfax.

"It is historic," laughed the artist, "and true to life, though I must confess that Tom's apology for the rifled room must be taken with caution. You will have already perceived, madame,"—Fairfax had drawn Tom to him and was speaking over his shoulder,—"that my greatness, both as a painter and otherwise, suffers from the too lofty ideal which my master"—he pinched Tom's cheek—"is always flaunting before me and before every-body else. But for all that, I assure you that Tom has been more to me than a cityful of patrons."

"I can believe you," she answered, with a quick glance of comprehension, "and I am sure he will vie with the wealthiest connoisseur in spreading your fame."

Fairfax bowed and looked pleased, while Madame

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Baronne again gave her whole attention to the picture, and looked at it in silence for a long time, seemingly much impressed.

Tom slipped out of Fairfax's hands and joined her. "That is my mother—the picture I am holding. It is this size." Tom spread his hands out. "It is worth fifty pounds, but I wouldn't take a thousand!"

Madame Baronne sighed and looked down at Tom with a sweet, sad look, which he did not understand, but Fairfax thought *he* did.

"I have no little boy to guard *my* portrait. And I have no portrait," she added with a lighter tone. "You did not tell me yesterday, Mr. Fairfax, that you painted portraits."

"Madame," said Fairfax, "I paint *every thing*—none of my sitters are here to be offended—except sign-boards and wheelbarrows. Possibly those are reserved for my matured skill."

"Then you would not stipulate that the subject should be historic?"

"Not at all. The historic value would be added later. Tom would see to that."

"Then was Tom correct in telling me that you would be willing to paint my portrait, seeing I have the honor of being his friend?"

"I should be delighted, Madame Baronne, both to oblige you and Tom. I say nothing about self-gratification, because, as you have learned already, I live solely for others."

"Yes, I have been taught that, though I have not yet

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learned," she added, with a laugh and a glance at Tom, "that your philanthropy is very far-reaching."

"No, no; I understand. Charity begins at home, and frequently stops next door. Tom is next door to me. Is not that the rebuke you wished to convey, madame?"

"Well, yes, something like that. But it was not a rebuke. When would it suit you to begin, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Let me see," he answered. "Le Bosquet will be finished this afternoon, and Madame Bonjour might wait for a day or two. I shall be quite ready to-morrow morning, if that would suit you. You will understand that my work is invariable and my terms uniform. I shall only require two sittings. I must not deceive you. I am now what is termed a lightning painter—I go in for effect. That is the only picture"—pointing to Tom and the sheriff's officers—"in which I have ever approached real portrait-painting!"

"But I should think you are making a mistake," said Madame Baronne; "and if you could give me the time I should like a *real* portrait. You can arrange the terms with my husband; I hope he will be down-stairs in a couple of days. I can give you as many sittings as you require."

"Oh, Mr. Fairfax," interposed Tom, "Madame Baronne has a most beautiful face! Do paint her as you painted me. You were painting me for three weeks, two or three times a day."

The artist and his visitor laughed.

"Thank you very much, madame; your suggestion is most kind; I will do my very best. But I will not trouble you to mount this ladder every day; I will paint you in

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your favorite nook among the roses—if you like that idea. Then you can read or work at leisure a good part of the time."

"I should like that immensely."

"Yes, Mr. Fairfax, and you won't make Madame Baronne a figure. I mean just a figure and nothing else. You'll make her a picture, with the green bench and that umbrella thing over the top, and the rose-bushes all round, and——"

"And you, Tom, I suppose, doing something, so that you can become 'famous.' Madame might allow you to be put in reading Mrs. Nodder's letter to her. You know Mrs. Nodder, I dare say, madame?"

"Indeed I do, intimately, and Johnny Gubbs, and the curate; and I know Barnfield very well, and am very sorry for all its 'rich people'—poor things! If they do not soon become famous, it won't be Tom's fault."

Tom grinned, and then nodded his head sagaciously.

"I don't tell every-body my secrets, Madame Baronne. There is not one person in all St. Jean who knows Mrs. Nodder, and I was there a month, and I went into nearly every house when I was looking for Wag. You might have Wag, if you like, lying at your feet."

"Not you, then?"

"No, not me—there! What could I have to do with you? But I don't want you to be just made a figure. There is a beautiful little girl at the post-office. Her mother would lend her, to sit on your knee, or to be giving you a bunch of flowers. Something, you know, to make a picture that people would stop to look at."

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"We will put in the garden-seat and the roses, Tom; but I think Madame Baronne must be painted alone," suggested the artist.

"Yes," she said; and her face changed as she looked away from Tom, whose suggestions she had been listening to with an amused expression. "You must paint me quite alone, or the picture would not be right." She turned her face and looked out of the window, and Fairfax saw from the slight heaving and sudden falling of her full shapely shoulders that she sighed. "To-morrow, then?"

"No. I think Monday now, madame."

"Very well, Monday. And now, since we have all become so very French, I will say *au revoir*, monsieur."

"*Au revoir*, madame. Tom—the door—I beg your pardon! When Tom swells out with pride in that way, this room is hardly big enough for one to pass!"

Tom had gone to the door quickly enough, but instead of opening it he had set his back against it, and there he stood with a confident smile and a straight question:

"Why do you say 'monsieur'? We are not French, and your name is Madame Baronne."

"I am as English as you, Tom."

"But your husband is Monsieur Baronne, and wives follow their husbands; and he is French."

"No; he is as English as Mr. Fairfax, though he has lived a great deal abroad, and here every-body is monsieur and madame. You will be *le jeune* monsieur."

"No, I shall be Tom, always Tom to those that—that I love. And, madame——" Tom stood on tip-toe, and put

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his arms up, signifying that he had something to say in a low voice.

The lady stooped down, with a pleasant, expectant smile, and as Fairfax looked at her her gentle gracious manner struck him very forcibly. His brain began rapidly to evolve the idea, which Tom had thrown out, of making a picture of Madame Baronne. She seemed so wonderfully winning, so sweet and sad—and something more. What was that something, the charm that would make the picture?

Tom helped him to a solution. His voice was only low enough to be emphatic, though he had drawn down Madame Baronne's head with its sunny hair till her little coral-pink ear was close to his lips.

"*I* know what it is to be lonely. Just before Mr. Fairfax began to love me I was always all alone, and I'll come to you whenever you want me—if—if I am not engaged."

That was it! Fairfax had caught the idea now. The look and the kiss which Madame Baronne gave Tom, and her last glance at the picture on the wall, told him the secret fully. She was a lonely woman, and that secret must be told as a secret with paints and canvas if he did not wish to make a figure of Madame Baronne.

Her last laughing *au revoir* as she gathered up her skirts to descend "the ladder," saying she had never scaled such heights of art before, and waved back Tom to his "engagements" because she had a lot of her own, did not cheat Fairfax out of his new idea, which was to be put into every inch of his new picture—"The sadness of being alone."

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CHAPTER VI

CONFIDENTIAL

"WHAT is the French, Monsieur Baronne, for genius?"

"Genius? Hanged if *I* know." Monsieur Baronne had a very gruff voice. "*Un homme très habile* means a very clever man. There isn't one. There are no geniuses in France. It's like Barnfield—oh! ah! Just move my leg again—higher; don't touch my foot! You callous young blackguard! There—oh, Lord! I can tell you the French for gout, Tom. I can tell you what gout is in any language that any body can speak, and in some that can't be spoken to a cub like you. Why do you stick here when you can run away and play? Do you like being blackguarded for a change, because every-body else tries to make you a little fool?"

"I don't mind it from you, Monsieur Baronne; because —because every-body knows you are very bad."

"What?"

"You've the gout and a bad cough; and I can learn a lot of French with you. You can speak French beautifully."

"Oh, I don't know, youngster; I've knocked about a bit for the last five years. And I can hail a cab in a good many languages by holding my stick up. I've met a good many people too—some geniuses, greater geniuses than

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Mr. Fairfax—but I'll be shot if ever I met any body before who would come and sit with me because I had the gout —oh! Be careful now. That's it; that's the very thing. You're a good sort, Tom. Come here and let me look right at you. I sha'n't bite. I've false teeth, and they're no good (except to the dentist). Every thing about me is false and of no good except as an example and a warning. Umph! You're a bright lad. Oh, grin away, so long as I can see you; every-body else grins behind my back. Would you like some cherries, or marbles, or half-crowns, or any thing? I can't ask you to have a drink; you are too young. And don't you ever go in for having drinks. Look at *me!*"

"I don't intend to," said Tom, giving the look he was invited to give, and probably showing more than was necessary the efficacy of the lesson which he thereupon laid to heart. "And I don't want any cherries or any thing. I like to sit here and move your leg for you and hear you talk French. Do you know, I think I would rather hear you talk French than English. What is the French for 'distemper'?"

"Distemper? What the deuce will you ask me next? What do you want to know for?"

"Because I'm writing to Monsieur Gustave—where we stopped in St. Jean. I promised to; besides, he was very good to Wag."

"Oh, then you must say, *Il est très-malade.* Here, hang it, I'll write it down for you—ah! *Dieu me damne!* You like to hear me talk French. Move the cushion—*sapristi,* that's given me a wrench. *Il est très-malade.*

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There! Tear the leaf out, and then pour me out a little cognac."

The sufferer now leaned back like a valiant martyr in his basket-chair, in which he sat under the trellised veranda by the door of Le Bosquet, with one leg stretched out on another chair piled up with cushions, a siphon and a bottle of cognac standing on a small iron table at his elbow.

"Is that right, Monsieur Baronne?"

"More! Go on, you little teetotal devil; you are worse than any of them!"

"There, then!" said Tom, dropping another saltspoonful into the tumbler with a great flourish, and frothing it up with potash water, "that's an awful lot. Why do you drink so much, Monsieur Baronne, when it's bad for the gout, and makes people think you're cross, and makes Madame Baronne unhappy, and—and makes your face look so—so—unbeautiful that you can't be painted?"

The sufferer sat up, without an interjection at the pain the exertion cost him.

"Well! No! Da—blame my eyes! I wish I could use this foot."

"What for, Monsieur Baronne?"

"To kick you from here down to the château and back."

Tom went and leaned over the basket-chair, putting one hand on the back of it, and looked into the man's face.

"Now, then, you impudent cub. What have you put your little head where I can knock it off for? Aren't you afraid of me?"

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"No. And I want you to get better. I'm beginning to be fond of you, and I *love* your wife. And I know you are not so—so very bad as you pretend to be."

"What? And I'm racked——"

"I mean you are nicer than anybody knows, or she wouldn't go on loving you as she does. Shall I move your leg again?"

"No! Sit down on it, if you like. Oh, Lord! And you say you don't want anything out of me? You are not begging for the heathen or the English poor in Paris?"

Tom stared at him.

"You are not a pickpocket of any kind? Hanged if you look like one!"

Now Tom grinned.

"Getting fond of me—still getting fond of me, although you've known me a fortnight. Yes, it was a fortnight ago to-day that I cuffed you out of the doorway when I first limped out. I could walk then. Oh, Lord! I wish my poor old father could hear that before he dies—just that, and nothing else."

"Have you a father, Monsieur Baronne?"

"Yes. Haven't other people fathers?"

"Oh, yes, young people."

"Well, I'm a young person—a smart young person—and he is dying, and I have had a share in killing him, though he's seventy-six and wouldn't see me the last time I was in England!"

"Not see you?"

"No. I'm a prodigal son! What are you staring at?

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Don't I look as if I'd lived with the pigs? I've been swinish enough, God knows! Hang it! I might be talking Portuguese. Do you never read your Bible, youngster? You can preach hard enough—yes, by Jove! and be as fat and comfortable and conceited over it as any parson I ever saw."

"Oh, I know about the prodigal son, Monsieur Baronne; but when *he* went home his father gave him a ring."

"Yes, and my father would have given me a wring too, if he could—he would have wrung my neck. Yes, and served me right. But now he says he has forgiven me. The poor old governor! my poor old dad! I wish I was in England. I would like to see him just once again, but I can hardly move. Oh! *sapristi*—and they say he won't live a month."

Tom again leaned confidingly over the invalid's chair, and looked encouragingly into his face.

"Monsieur Baronne!"

"Now, then"—his voice sounded gruffer than ever—"I wasn't talking to you, boy. I forgot you were there; I was talking to myself."

"You know Latin, don't you?"

"I know *mensa*, and *amo-amas*. What now? No more of those blamed conundrums for one day. I don't know the Latin for 'swine-herd' or 'fatted calf.'"

"But you know *Dum spiro spero;* because I do—'While I breathe, I hope.' And you *could* get to England in a month—you might get in a fortnight. And your face would be nice and white again—it will be fit to be painted,

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just as it was when you first came down stairs, if"—Tom edged his face still nearer to Monsieur Baronne's and looked more encouragingly than ever—"if you would just be teetotal—as teetotal as I am. There, that's because I'm getting fond of you."

This was followed by another explosion of indignation and a great discharge of epithets, which fell as harmlessly on his bland intrepid counsellor as before. And notwithstanding Monsieur Baronne's ungenial inclinations, expressed with groans and writhings, to break Tom's head with the brandy-bottle, or insure him a swift teetotal death by choking him with the siphon, Tom was very soon moving his cushions again with consolatory or extraneous remarks, and Monsieur Baronne was receiving his attention, also his remarks, with a yet greater toleration than he had shown before. He even intersprinkled his full-flavored epithets, during Tom's operations, with a few "Thank you's," and requested the boy to take one of his cushions to make himself more comfortable on the floor. For Tom had sat down and leaned his head against the basket-chair preparatory to telling the invalid (by request) how he broke Johnny Gubbs's head with Mr. Patterwell's "beer in a jug," for calling him Barty.

"Oh," said Monsieur Baronne, when he had heard with some show of interest and comparatively few of his own characteristic interpolations the culminating events of Tom's life in Barnfield, "then I should think Johnny Gubbs's face wouldn't be fit to be painted for some days after you left?"

"No."

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Tom gave a little reflective grin.

"But Mrs. Nodder has told me it didn't cost his mother any thing, so I don't care, and his big brother is very glad I did it."

"Humph! And you would have liked Mr. Fairfax to paint my portrait? I could give him sittings enough."

"Oh, I should, Monsieur Baronne, and you must ask him to when—when you've been home. Look at Madame Baronne's—isn't it getting a lovely picture?"

"Well, it ought to be. They are taking time enough over it. And they seem to enjoy it."

"Yes," Tom assented with great cheerfulness, "Mr. Fairfax does like it. He is never tired of it. He is always looking at the picture even when Madame Baronne is not there. But he says he can never make her as beautiful as he knows she is."

"Does he? I thought he rather admired her."

Tom was waxing enthusiastic, and only attributed the extra gruffness of Monsieur Baronne's tone to an extra twinge of gout.

"Oh, he does. Why, *I* can see that. And look at Madame Baronne; she has grown quite—quite different. She was so very, very lonely; and, of course, I'm only a little boy, and I can't talk as grown-up people like to talk, though I often tried to cheer her up. And even since you've got down you've—you've been no good; you've had to sit with your leg on a chair all day. And there are no other English people here. Oh, I *am* glad Madame Baronne has found a companion that she likes. Shall I tell you a secret?"

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"Yes. I'm interested."

"Well, you know, Mr. Fairfax did not wish to paint Madame Baronne as a figure. You know what I mean. If you were painted now sitting in a chair or standing up, even if you could stand, you would be just a figure, you know, and nothing else."

"I know that. You've made that pretty plain two or three times to-day. Go on."

"Well, it was our first idea—I and Mr. Fairfax made it up together—to make Madame Baronne look very lonely, as lonely as paint could make her, Monsieur Baronne."

"Oh!"

"Yes. But now Mr. Fairfax has another idea; it has grown out of our first idea. You know, Mr. Fairfax is a very clever man, as well as a great painter, and every-body who knows him gets to be very fond of him. He can say such beautiful things, and gets inside people's hearts, you know. That's because he is a genius. Do you understand?"

"You are making it as plain as A B C, Tom. Go on. What's his new idea? I didn't know he was *quite* such a genius; but I shall not forget it."

"Well, now he is going to make her *resigned*. *We* shall call the picture 'Resignation.' She will be exactly like—— Oh, I forget her name, but she was a saint, a very beautiful lady who spent most of her time on the rack, and still kept beautiful."

"Indeed! Well, it's very kind of him. It's a deuced delightful compliment. And I shall let him know that I appreciate it, so far as I can."

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"But it's a secret—— Are you making fun, Monsieur Baronne?"

"Not exactly! It's not a funny thing, is it?"

"Well, it's a secret, you know, about the saint on the rack."

"Oh, you can trust *me*, Tom. But it will make me watch the painting with much more interest, and the painter too. I shall reward him handsomely. But that's a secret too, Tom. That's our secret, you know."

"Oh, yes! I sha'n't mention that. Mr. Fairfax is—well, he is very funny about being paid. He made Madame Baronne laugh. You know, we only charged twenty francs each for all the people we painted in St. Jean, but they were done in a day, you know. And we were not paid for some of these. But Mr. Fairfax didn't care."

"Of course not! A genius like that. *What* was his charge?"

"Twenty francs. They were poor people, you know, *les paysans*."

"Humph! What a good, kind man he is! Yes, I think they enjoy each other's society. How long have they been gone now, Tom? Do you think they are picking up any more new ideas—going to drop the saint for—for a widow or something?"

"No," Tom answered, laughing. "It is too late now. And a saint is better for Madame Baronne. You know your medicine sometimes takes a lot of making up. And the cigar-shop is at the very end of the town. And they may have lost Wag; you know he always goes into

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people's houses at dinner-time. Do you want any thing, Monsieur Baronne? Because you must never mind asking *me*."

"No, Tom, thank you, except just to bend my leg again. Gently—it's getting as stiff as a Jew's neck. There! Come round here, you little beggar, and let me look at you. You are the only human creature, or any other creature, that doesn't scuttle out of my way as soon as ever it can. It was a queer chance that sent you. Did they *tell* you to stick here till they came back?"

"No. Only I said I was going to talk to you. But, Monsieur Baronne——"

"Well?"

"It isn't *chance*. Now what do you think chance is? That is one of the things I want to find out; and I'm going to do it. Did you know that?"

"No; but I'm not surprised. How far have you got?"

"Well, I'll tell you. But you first tell me what you think chance is? Will you, Monsieur Baronne?"

"Well, I think it's a humbugging kind of thing that comes round a corner and slaps you in the face. There are good chances too, I suppose, but I've never run across them. I expect they are very particular where they go, and keep out of bad company. Now, then, what's your idea?"

Tom laughed.

"Oh, you make fun of chance, Monsieur Baronne. You make fun of nearly every thing, except the gout; but chance is a very wonderful thing. Do you know, I think it is one of the most wonderful things there is, except

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dreams. I am going to find out what dreams are some day, if I have time. But dreams do not make you do any thing, except the nightmare, and chance does. Monsieur Baronne, chance made me come to Switzerland, though then I did not believe there was any chance."

"Ah, that was when you were young. Just bend it again, Tom—oh! And now what do you believe about it?"

"Well, you may laugh, but I believe a great deal. And so does Mr. Fairfax, now. We have talked about it for hours; I like to. Now last night, after we had been playing croquet—he played with me for an hour and a half—we sat down on the box and talked, and we got to talk about chance, because I like to, and then we shut our eyes and picked out the balls with our eyes shut, and guessed what color they were. Now, you tell me, Monsieur Baronne; when we guessed right, was that chance?"

"I should say so, unless it was cheating."

"Well, it was not, because we were only playing at chance. We were shutting our eyes on purpose, and doing every thing ourselves. Now you can't play at chance proper and do every thing yourself. Mr. Fairfax found that out, for chance proper is a joining of something that we do—with our eyes open, you know—and something that God does. That's as far as we've got, Monsieur Baronne."

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CHAPTER VII

ON VIEW

Not until a fortnight after Tom and Monsieur Baronne discussed madame's portrait, with the origin and development of the artist's idea, was the great painting finished. Altogether it had been on the easel about a month. Now for two days it had stood conspicuously placed on view for all the *visiteurs* in the *salon* of Le Bosquet.

Madame's husband—who was now limping about with the aid of two sticks—had examined it frequently and carefully, and expressed himself (in irreproachable French and with admirable manners) to a little knot of gazers, including Monsieur le Propriétaire and his wife, as greatly charmed with it.

To Tom he had remarked privately several times—with characteristic directness of speech and ambiguity of sense—"that the idea had been well worked out," "that the genius had succeeded," and "that he wished he could reward him according to his works."

With the artist himself Monsieur Baronne had assumed the position, without affecting the airs, of the patron. He always had a word to say to Fairfax on the weather or some incident (usually disagreeable) of like usefulness for passing civilities. He was always suavely reticent or uncongenially chatty; and except in those intervals when

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he quitted generalities and good tone to allude to his personal ailments in strong language, he was even punctiliously polite, just as he was when mingling with the French visitors.

It was pretty evident these two men were inclined to despise each other, and having to assume some faint cordiality which they did not feel, were likely to despise each other a little more on that account.

Tom cited Monsieur Baronne's manner toward Fairfax as an evidence of that gentleman's genius and general sway over human nature.

"Because," said Tom, "he talks in a very different way to me. He is not at all particular what he says, and I have heard him once or twice speak very rudely to his wife."

But if Fairfax and Monsieur Baronne cloaked any of their thoughts, the spectators in the *salon*, when none of the English visitors were present, expressed their opinions, without reserve, both on the picture and on the people whom it most concerned; and in some of their remarks they displayed an amount of perspicacity worthy of attention.

Monsieur A. observed, with commendatory gesticulation: "But, yes, it is a most beautiful picture."

Madame X., with bows and gestures suitable to the remark: "Certainly, monsieur. But not of madame."

Monsieur B.: "Why, yes. It is madame as monsieur the painter saw her. It is a work of art. Truly he has put his soul into the canvas."

Monsieur C.: "Ah, no, monsieur, we do not put our

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souls into canvas. I appeal to you, mesdames. Are you canvas?"

MADAME Y.: "My faith, I did not know the English had any souls."

MONSIEUR B.: "Madame! And Monsieur Baronne almost killed himself on the spot to pick up your ball of wool this very morning—with his soul in his eyes."

MADAME Y.: "Oh, the odious creature! I pity madame his wife."

MONSIEUR C.: "As much as monsieur the painter does, madame?"

MADAME Y.: "Pardon, monsieur, I said pity."

MONSIEUR C.: "Mesdames, messieurs, pardon. I have a question. If monsieur the painter's soul is not in that picture, where is it (such as you would allow him to have, madame)? Because we all know he has lost it."

MADAME X.: "Madame Baronne has found it and intends to keep it."

MADAME Y.: "The beautiful thief!"

MONSIEUR B.: "Not a thief, madame. Exchange is no robbery. That is one of their own proverbs."

MONSIEUR A.: "But what about Monsieur Baronne?"

MADAME Y.: "Ah, I think it is a long time ago since madame's heart belonged to him. He is very rich in lands and gold, so Madame Bonjour says; but, alas, wretched man! I think in affections he would be a pauper if it were not for Monsieur Tom."

MONSIEUR A.: "But, yes, that is true. Madame Jayer, there, daily tells him he is looking better, and out of her charity gives him sympathy; but do we not all know that

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madame loves all the poor and wretched, especially if they are foreigners ?"

MONSIEUR B.: "That is true, monsieur. Only yesterday I was wishing I was a sick foreigner and walked with a stick. I would also like monsieur's land and gold ; but I should not like his nose nor his voice—no, not even for Madame Jayer's consolation. But you have not given us your opinion, madame."

MADAME J.: "Eh ! Well, then, I think you are all wrong ; for monsieur the painter's heart is still with the young monsieur, his nephew—it is locked up there; it is very safe, and I think Madame Baronne is an angel."

MADEMOISELLE M.: "Yes, and I also."

MONSIEUR A.: "Bravo, mademoiselle !"

MONSIEUR B.: "There, see how one angel will protect another !"

MONSIEUR C.: "Mademoiselle, I have sinned ; but I repent. Now I love the Englishmen—yes, even their stiff legs and their stiff bows. Teach me to love them more."

MADAME X.: "Angels, monsieur, have better employment. Have they not, mademoiselle ? For lessons in the divine art, monsieur, you must seek a teacher among us who is only human. She might have more patience with you."

MONSIEUR C.: "Thank you, madame. I will go and meditate in solitude upon your advice. *Bonjour*, mesdames, messieurs !"

A chorus of *bonjour*, messieurs, and a contralto voice :

"Meditate upon the angels, monsieur. It is good to do so. But remember there are two kinds——"

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A chorus of voices in remonstrance:

"Madame!" "Oh, fie, madame!" "Fie, madame!"

The contralto voice:

"I say there are two kinds, the angels of the Bible, which are all men, and those of our sex, which you will find only in the Church's legends and in Le Bosquet. *Au revoir*, mesdames; *au revoir*, messieurs."

"Ah, you go too, madame?" amid laughter and another chorus of *au revoirs* and *bonjours*, with innumerable turnings and bowings.

"And you, mademoiselle? Ah, you are all going to join the great company of angels."

"How?"

"Pardon, monsieur."

"Explain yourself."

The ladies grouped about the door, and those moving toward it all turned round.

"The best, mesdames—the invisible!"

"Thank you, monsieur," many times repeated, derisively and otherwise; more turnings and bowings, *au revoirs* and *bonjours*, with the exit of all the ladies and half the gentlemen.

Then an alternation of men's voices—shrugs of the shoulders—spreading of the hands—laughs, the exchange of cigarettes, and of new opinions, pointed and unpoetic, on the painting and on the painter, on the subject of the picture, on the angels, human and otherwise; then, final *au revoirs*, the smell and the last film of new-lit cigarettes; and Madame Baronne looked down from her place of honor toward the open door, resigned and beautiful, "all alone" once more.

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Meanwhile the real Madame Baronne is in her own sitting-room, looking every now and then extremely like her picture in the *salon*. But she is talking, and Madame Baronne talking makes that beautiful picture but a poor thing. She is talking to Mr. Fairfax, who is sitting on the opposite side of a small work-table, on which lies a book, turned down at the page where madame left off a quarter of hour ago, and a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Mr. Fairfax has brought her the flowers, and Madame Baronne keeps taking them up and turning them over as she talks to her *vis-à-vis*, or turns her head to look out of the window—down on the grounds in front of Le Bosquet. There Monsieur Baronne is limping about with Tom. He is now under a curative diet of light wines and potash—in training for "being painted." He has postponed the idea of going to England, having heard that his old father has given up the idea of dying for the present.

"Yes, indeed, you have surprised me, monsieur. We shall miss you immensely. Alas for our little colony, the English colony in Neuville!"

"Half the inhabitants, madame. Yes, it is an exodus, and we shall go with weeping and wailing. Tom, I am afraid, will do his part aloud when I tell him. But one must look ahead. My work is finished in Neuville, though I could have wished it to last very much longer."

"Doubtless," answered Madame Baronne. "It is a restful place; but, of course, ambitious young men cannot settle down in restful places. But I am glad you came. We shall always remember you."

Fairfax looked out of the window and raised his eye-

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brows with a slight smile—not fully crediting the assertion or enjoying the compliment, from its want of directness. She understood him, and added quietly, with a new emphasis, dropping the artificial *we:*

"Yes, I shall always remember this last month as a very pleasant one."

"Thank you, madame. So shall I—the very pleasantest I ever had," and the look on Fairfax's face fully bore out his words. Fairfax had wished his companion—almost invited her—to say what she had said—a modest wish; yet as soon as it was said, and he had replied with much fervor, he remembered that that was one of the little climaxes of conversation which he had intended expressly to avoid.

However, the young man might have been very comfortable in his mind if he had known how resolved this new sweet friend of his was that their good-bying should be saved from any climax that she would not like to recall.

"You know, monsieur, you have taught me a great deal—a great deal that is good for me—besides patience and the habit of sitting still. Yes, and little Tom! I think I shall really cry. I shall climb up to the studio and sit down in Tom's corner and have a real little cry when you have taken him from me."

Fairfax smiled and nodded.

"And so shall we. By the waters of Babylon—that is, Geneva, perhaps—we shall weep——"

"Not for the waters of Neuville, monsieur. You have both ignored them, and Tom has abused them shamefully,

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dear boy; and what will my husband do without his head physician? And his portrait," she added in a yet lighter tone—"he was going to ask you to paint it."

"Ah, yes," said Fairfax, "*l'homme propose.* But you might see Tom again. I would send him to you for a week any time if you remain here long."

"Yes," she answered, "you might. We should like it immensely," but she did not say a word about writing or exchanging addresses. "And you, Monsieur le Peintre, I shall hope soon to hear of you being 'famous.' And, you know, you must copy Tom's ambition in its entirety."

"How? What is that?"

"Surely you know; you have taught him?"

"No; we have taught each other. On the whole, I think he is the leading spirit. But what is this ambition of his?"

"'I am going to be famous—and a good man!'"

"Oh, yes! I remember. It is a big programme. But I shall stick to it. I shall follow Tom, and you must believe me when I say that I shall find it easier, especially the 'being good' part, whenever I remember Neuville and you."

Madame Baronne laughed and bowed.

"Must I believe you? It is a beautiful compliment, better even than any the Frenchmen have paid me; but they were French compliments, and easy to answer."

Fairfax laughed lightly.

"But mine is English, genuine; our acquaintance has not had a French foundation."

"Ah, yes, I know it is. I know you mean what you

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say. And I shall find my programme easier too, you must believe me, after all those pleasant 'sittings.' But mine is a less ambitious one; I can only aspire to be—to be a good woman. I don't want to be famous like you and Tom. But," she continued in the same nonchalant tone, "I think we have been French enough! Oh, how my husband laughs at our 'monsieurs' and 'madames,' and what he calls our French *empressement!*"

"Well, you know, my dear Mrs.——"

"Oh, don't—that does sound odd—let me remain madame, or we shall be getting down to a bowing acquaintance—though we've hardly time."

"I hope not," said Fairfax in a quiet voice.

"No, indeed!"

Madame Baronne touched the flowers on the table caressingly, and looked out of the window. Then she turned round to Fairfax with a bright, frank smile.

"I am sorry you are going, Monsieur le Peintre; but I wouldn't keep you another day. You have been idling now for nearly a week, and I'm sure your idea is a good one of going up the mountains. Always climbing is the way to make famous and good men. You see, I am unselfish now I have got my portrait, if I can call it a portrait; for I'm half afraid, you know, it's 'just a figure' after all."

"How?" Fairfax looked surprised.

"Oh, I mean no slight—not one of Tom's figures, but a figure in paint. An ideal, would you call it?"

"Of what, madame?"

"Oh, I don't know! But something better than I am—

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something rather lofty. I'm very proud of it; and I'm going to try to live up to it—to the idea I mean, not to the complexion; that is quite beyond me. What *is* the idea, monsieur? You might tell me. Tom won't. He only puts his head on one side and says, 'The idea is well worked out'; and when I ask him what the idea is he says, 'Oh, well—why, it's not to make a figure of you.' Now that's not a lofty idea, but it's all I can get from Tom. He has tantalized me in that way for a month, and I think you ought to tell me."

"The idea—oh!"—Fairfax hesitated—"there is no idea, madame, except the idea of all great artists"—he laughed—"to paint the soul of things, and when that is very beautiful it is very difficult to do; and Tom, you know, is a gross flatterer."

"And you, Monsieur le Peintre, you are a greater flatterer with your brush. You have been flattering me every day for a month. But"—she laughed easily—"it has been very nice and I shall try to live up to it."

"A month!" said Fairfax dreamily; "it seems a year." Then in a different voice, "To-day is Monday; we shall go on Thursday. You must leave me to tell Tom, madame, because he won't like it!"

"Oh, yes; he will be no longer my little boy. We shall miss you both." And again she looked out of the window at her husband and Tom, who were walking toward the fountain.

Fairfax got up and looked out of the window too.

"Would you like to go in the garden? Shall we join them?" he asked, "or shall I leave you with your

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novel again?" He turned over the leaves. "Is it nice?"

"Oh, no! It is tedious stuff—about a married woman's flirtation, who will not be happy, any body can see, till the last page comes, the little fool, when she could have dismissed her *amoureux*, and set the reader at liberty, and saved the author's reputation—I shall never open another book of his—all in one chapter. I shall be very pleased to come out. Oh, here they come—see, Tom is a splendid doctor."

She waved her hand at the open window, and put on her garden hat, which had lain on the table.

"Now I am ready, monsieur. But wait one moment—my beautiful flowers—I must put them in water this minute. I shall keep these as long as ever I can—long after Thursday. I will be back directly!"

So she stepped gayly across the room and out of the door, humming, "I have a song to sing."

She put the flowers in water then, but what she did later with them might have afforded new matter for reflection among the visitors, who that morning had so gossipingly discussed her affairs in the *salon*, could they only have seen it all.

But they saw nothing, not even the living flowers. And what can a few dead leaves, found in an old novel, where the page is stained with the color those flowers once had, and some few other little faint stains, which might have been tears once—what can those things tell? Nothing—nothing but what we all know and laugh at, if any body happens to be looking on when we pick up our

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dead forget-me-nots and put them back between the old stained leaves. What can they tell? Nothing but the old tale—of the old useful experience, which left us so wise and so much better (for this world)—so much more like other people (common people). What do they speak of, those withered things? Of the sap and sweetness and color of life pressed out of our hearts with tears long ago —our hearts, now so much like those withered things that once were flowers.

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CHAPTER VIII

MORE CONFIDENTIAL

"VERY well, then, *Mr. Bar-ronne*—is that right?"

"No, it isn't right; but it's the best shot you've made for a fortnight. Can't you say *Ba?*"

"Yes."

"And can't you say *rone?*"

"Yes. Captain was a roan horse—r-o-a-n!"

"Very well, then; put them together—though that's not the way you spell it, and I'm not a captain. Should have been if the examiners had been soldiers instead of school-masters in uniform."

"How *do* you spell your name, Mr. Ba-rone?"

"B-a-r-o-w-n-e. It's a good English name, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes; it's a very pretty name. But why does every-body call you Monsieur Baronne?"

"Because they are fools, and I don't care what they call me. It's no use talking to fools, is it, unless they are little ones? Now go and fetch me a bottle of that toast-and-water stuff—Yvorne they call it. I've siphon left for another tun. Don't you like to ask for it?"

"Oh, I don't mind carrying a bottle of wine—here, Mr. Bar-rone!"

"Well, where else are we? We are not in St. Philip's Terrace, and I didn't ask you to bring it in a jug, did I?"

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Tom grinned, and said "No!" very decisively.

"You wouldn't do that for me, though you are getting fond of me?"

"No; I wouldn't fetch you beer in a jug—from a public-house."

"But you would for Mr. Fairfax?"

"Oh, yes; yes, of course I would, if he wanted it. I would fetch him any thing from anywhere."

"Umph! You are his Wag, and he fusses and stuffs you as you do yours. Look at the pot-bellied reptile! He is wiping his wet nose on my sacred foot."

"He is beginning to get fond of you, Mr. Bar-rone."

"Is he? Well, if he had begun that way a week ago, he wouldn't have lived to get fond of any body else. We are coming on, Tom, eh?"

"Oh, yes—you've—you've been very good, you know."

"I've been nearly poisoned. But go ahead; fetch me some more. You've not been so very bad except for your impudence."

Tom set off to the house for a bottle of Yvorne, followed by Wag; and Mr. Barowne got up from his chair and walked three times round the arbor in which they had been sitting, setting his feet down in military fashion—though the experiment hurt him—to assure himself that "they were coming on."

Then he went inside again and sat down. He took out his cigar-case and laid it beside the siphon, open. Then he proceeded to lug some big packet, like a pound of tea, out of another pocket, and put it on the table opposite Tom's chair.

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When he had done that, he made an unparliamentary remark to himself about himself; and another about Tom, not more polite, but wholly eulogistic. Then he lighted a cigar and listened for Tom's return.

"Here you are, Mr. Bar-rone. Mr. Fairfax has begun to drink this instead of *macon;* but he says that a whole bottle would—— What is that?"

"*I* don't know. It's for you. Pitch into it. I got the *garçon* to buy it. He says it's very good. But I know he can lie like a weathercock."

"Oh, my! It's nougat. Thank you, Mr. Bar-rone, I can eat an awful lot of nougat; but—oh, my goodness!—I can't eat this in a week—not with what I give away. Will you have some?"

Tom made this invitation clear by dangling an enormous lump of the sticky sweet stuff before Mr. Barowne's face, for he had already stowed a sample into his own mouth which affected his intonation.

"Not exactly. Give Wag a chunk. He's waiting for it."

Tom shook his head violently, and spread his hand over the pile of nougat to protect it, while he made an effort to get room for his tongue to explain his conduct.

"Sticks to his teeth—sticks them together—makes him scratch his cheeks and stand on his head, and get awfully sick. Will give some to the little pigs, and a lot to the people after dinner."

"That's all right. Give them as much as ever they'll take. I hope it will stick *their* teeth together. They are always chattering; and they do every thing, as it is,

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except stand on their heads, when they get excited. Now what were we talking about? We had done with 'chance.' You said it was a kind of game—men *versus* angels, with heavy odds on the angels—at least that's what I understood."

"No, Mr. Bar-rone; I said it was like men doing something to win, as they do in a game of chess, or as they do in a battle—a battle is better—and the angels moving in and out among them and doing things too, to prevent accidents, and—and—to make them win; because the angels can see what's coming and we can't. That's where Mr. Fairfax and I have got now."

"Yes, of course. I knew there was a scrimmage, and the angels were in it. But we had done with that."

"Why, of course. You were telling me about your father's big house; and the two lodges and the deer; and the old butler, who is always drunk at eleven o'clock, and winds twenty clocks up. But your father won't let him go because he does nothing else, and he has always sat just behind him in the same place at church every Sunday for forty years. I wonder if your clergyman is anything like Mr. Patterwell?"

"Why? Does *he* tipple like our old butler?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Bar-rone. He is a good man. He does not drink much—not every day—but when he does drink he likes beer in a jug, because it's cheaper than bottles. Mr. Patterwell is a very good man, only nobody seems to take any notice of what he says, and I don't think they would in forty years. But he writes poetry!"

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"Poor beggar! Caught the complaint, do you know, or insanity in the family?"

"What? Whose family? There! I won't eat any more until after dinner. Now what did you say?"

"Well, I said—here, wipe your sticky hands on my coat, if you don't mind—it shows on the knees of these light bags. I was saying that I used to be very fond of poetry; it's in our family. I had a brother who died of it, and I know a great lot myself."

"Oh, Mr. Bar-rone, I—I can't believe you are fond of poetry."

"Then I tell you I am. But don't call me Mr. Bar-rone; it hurts my foot and strikes right up to my hip. There's only one 'r'—Barowne. It's one of the best names in England. And as for poetry, it's been the ruin of us—together with port wine and poor marriages!"

"Then say me a bit—now. I *am* glad you like poetry."

"Very well:

> "'The boy stood on the burning deck,
> Whence all but he had fled'——

You've made me think of this. You are the boy who stood there, and Mr. Fairfax is the father, who told you to stand."

"Yes! It is 'Casabianca.' Go on—I like it."

> "'The boy stood on the burning deck,
> Whence all but he had fled:
> And when the flames burned off his feet
> He stood upon his head.'

I forget the rest. But I know the little beggar died—very naturally—and served him right."

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"It *didn't* serve him right. And, besides, what if he did die? He is famous! Oh, Mr. Barowne, you—you are very bad. And my mother taught me 'Casabianca.' Do you remember *your* mother?"

"Yes, God bless her! I do. I say, Tom, I didn't know, you know, that your mother taught it you. I—I'm awfully sorry, my little chap. Here."

Mr. Barowne's voice sounded a little less gruff as he put out his hand to catch Tom, who, he feared, was about to leave him.

"It doesn't matter a bit now. It's all right, Mr. Barowne. Of course you couldn't tell that my mother had any thing to do with 'Casabianca.' And—Mr. Barowne!"

"Well?"

"You are not so bad as I thought you—I know you are not, now—and—you—you are not a quarter as bad as every-body else thinks you."

"No? Well, that's comforting!"

"Do you know 'The Psalm of Life,' Mr. Barowne—'Tell me not in mournful numbers'? That is very beautiful poetry. I learned that myself out of a book—one of my prizes—though Mr. Fairfax helped me; and he made lots of fun; but I didn't care. My mother had nothing to do with 'The Psalm of Life,' you know. I don't think she knew there was one; but I like some of it very much. You know that verse about footprints and a shipwrecked brother? Have you a brother, Mr. Barowne?"

"No; I'm the only surviving son—I'm the heir. I had a brother, but he didn't survive—couldn't—hadn't the constitution—and wouldn't drink Yvorne and sulphur-water;

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and he didn't leave any children that count for any thing. Dear old chap, we were good friends."

"How do you mean 'count for any thing,' Mr. Barowne?"

"Oh, I don't know—I didn't mean any thing. They weren't baptized, or registered, or swaddled, or something! But they died—they died! God bless me, do you want the misfortunes of our family down to the Conquest, with all the deaths? You've eaten too much of that nasty nougat, and it's made you as sad as a tombstone, and you want to depress me till I can't breathe. I wish you wouldn't. *I* couldn't help every-body and every thing dying, could I?"

"No, of course not, Mr. Barowne. Let us talk about your father's big house and the deer—the rich people of Barnfield haven't got deer—deer must be very expensive indeed."

"No, we won't talk about that; that's not a cheerful subject. And it isn't a big house. It's a tumble-down hole, as the neighbors call it; but the Barownes lived there in the Civil Wars, when it nearly tumbled down on their heads."

"Oh! Was there fighting there?"

"Yes, and there has been fighting there ever since. We are a fighting family. Poor old Greyfort! It will be mine directly. But don't talk about it. I can't bear it. It's the biggest tombstone of all."

"Very well, Mr. Barowne, I won't; but sha'n't you live there?"

"No, not now; it's too late. I couldn't afford it, and

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my wife doesn't care for it. She doesn't care for any thing now. And, God knows, I never want to show my face there. What could I do in a place like Greyfort? I can't sit on a horse, and I couldn't walk half-a-mile with a gun, and I'm not exactly the thing to sit and be gazed at. Look at me! When do you think I shall be fit to be painted, eh? I shall want a good many coats to cover the cracks. If we could only be painted inside, Tom! I'm very bad; I'm worse than you know—in my health, I mean—you smug young parson. I'm bad here,"—Monsieur Barowne touched his chest,—"I'm falling to pieces, and nobody cares, except it's you. Yes, I know you do. I know, Tom. Never mind my bags. Wipe your boots on them, if you like. Yes, sit there. Oh, my God! To think that a child should come and sit down on my knee without being paid for it, or afraid of being sent to bed. And the finest little beggar I ever met. There aren't many like you, Tom. I didn't know they made 'em."

"Mr. Barowne,"—Tom had not only made himself very comfortable on this irascible gentleman's knee; he had stroked his cheek and caressed his hair—there was not very much to caress,—"I've *got* fond of you now. I'm right down fond of you. And you are better, you are a great lot better; you are quite fit to be painted. I will speak to Mr. Fairfax to-day. And you speak to him too, will you?"

"Yes, I will, Tom, if you think I'm ready."

"Well, you are—and—why, when you smile, you—you look nice. I shall think my very hardest, and I shall talk to Mr. Fairfax, and—we shall get an idea."

"What?"

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"You sha'n't be made a figure of if I can help it. Haven't we made a beautiful picture of Mrs. *Barowne?* Is that the way your family call themselves?"

"You've hit it, Tom. You are a patient, good lad. But about that picture—my wife's, I mean! Between me and you, Tom, it's too sad; it's melancholy. It's made me right down d——d miserable. I say, you don't tell Mr. Fairfax every thing, do you?"

"Well, n-no—not exactly every thing. I didn't tell him when Wag got in the cuisine and ate that chicken up. I—I let him find that out. Madame Bonjour told him. She put it in the bill."

"Well, then, let him find this out."

"Very well, Mr. Barowne. Why does it make you miserable? It's just like her."

"Oh, but it isn't like what she was three years ago, when I married her."

"Only three years ago, Mr. Barowne?"

"That's all. But she wasn't like a saint who spent most of her time on the rack then. And if she ever looked as lonely as paint could make her, it wasn't when I was there. But I don't know why the deuce I should talk to you——"

"Go on, Mr. Barowne; I like it. You must talk to somebody, you know."

"That's it, Tom. What a cute, beautiful little beggar you are!"

"Well, and I like it; I like it more—I like it as much as talking about chance. And you loved Mrs. Barowne very, very much then, didn't you?"

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"I did, Tom; I thought I loved her enough to give up being a d——d fool. She didn't know what I was, and I didn't know myself. I thought I was reformed. I did, indeed!"

"Well, you are reforming now, Mr. Barowne; you—you nearly are reformed. And she still loves you very much."

"Do you think so?" Mr. Barowne looked very much interested.

"I know it."

"How? That's just what I want to find out. I've watched Mr. Fairfax. I mean I've looked at him painting, you know, just to find that out. But I can't. And who the deuce—how do you know that, Tom?"

"Because"—Tom spoke deliberately, and with inward conviction—"she says so. I asked her if she did."

"Ah, Tom!"—Mr. Barowne laughed bitterly—"is that all? Well, it can't matter so very much now. But it would be rather a sell for all this reformation to go for nothing. It goes against the grain. It's poor, thin stuff, it's deuced unpalatable slop, this Swiss wine."

"Then don't drink any more—don't drink any thing but water, Mr. Barowne. You can drink hot water for a change, as hot as you like. It's very good for indigestion, and—and all kinds of things that you suffer from."

"Here! That'll do. That's a trifle rash. That's a bit dangerous. You'll throw me back. Let us go and have another look at Mrs. Barowne's picture. Come on, my dashing captain of the gouty blue-devils, lead the way."

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CHAPTER IX

"NEARLY A STROKE"

"WHAT! Up there? No, I'm not going up there to see any body's mother—without a lift!"

"Oh, I'll give you a lift, Mr. Barowne. Take hold of the banister, and I'll lift one leg at a time. That's the door, see! We are nearly there."

"Banister? I thought this was the lightning conductor. We are on the roof now. And how the deuce do you think I'm to get down again without a lift—I mean hydraulic lift—you callous little wretch? Here, let us sit down a bit."

And Tom's new friend, whom he was conducting to the studio, sank on the stairs with a groan.

"Very well, Mr. Barowne; we've lots of time. I *am* glad you've come at last, because this picture is sure to be famous. It may even be historic, though the Academy wouldn't buy it. Are your legs comfortable, Mr. Barowne?"

"Yes, very. Go on. I wish the Academy had bought it. Why wouldn't they?"

"Well, I think, you know, it was because—just because it went from Barnfield. You know——"

"Oh, yes; I know Barnfield—Mrs. Nodder lives there, and Johnny Gubbs, and some other rich people; but I

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don't suppose the Academy chaps know it, unless you've met some of 'em. Of course they wouldn't buy it from Barnfield. They'd suspect a plant, a long-firm dodge. How much did he ask 'em for it?"

"Oh, he has not fixed any price yet; but to me and Mr. Fairfax, you know, it has no price—it's—it's fabulous, Mr. Barowne!"

"Is it? Then give me your hand—pull! There!" Mr. Barowne found his feet slowly. "I shall never see the *salon* again, and the beautiful green earth; but I'll see 'you and your mother' now, if I die for it."

"It's fabulous to us, you know, because it has to do with our fortunes. You know, we came away to seek our fortunes—we both thought of it the same night. That was the very beginning of chance—our chance, you know."

"Yes."

"Well, then, it was this picture, when the Academy wouldn't buy it, which made Mr. Fairfax run away from Barnfield—and I was running away from Barnfield at the same time—and this picture is my mother and me—and I and Mr. Fairfax, we love each other—more—more—oh, I think we love each other more than any two people ever loved each other before. Now you can understand, Mr. Barowne, can't you, why I'm going to find out what chance is—and why this picture is fabulous to us?"

"Yes, I'm beginning to grasp it. How many more steps are there, and is there a fire-escape in Neuville to come down by? Oh, Lord, my legs! my back! my side!"

"One, three, five—only five, Mr. Barowne, and you can stop when we get there. I *am* glad you've come."

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"There," cried Tom, a quarter of a minute later, "there it is, and this is the place to stand!"

"Thunder and lightning! Why didn't you fetch it down? I thought it took up one side of the room. It wouldn't be a big one to take two."

"Oh, I never thought of that, Mr. Barowne. But, you know, it isn't the size of a picture that makes it famous, just as it isn't the size of a town. Look at big Barnfield."

"Humph! It's like you, Tom. It's deuced good. Hanged if he's *not* a genius. Here, hand me a chair—is there one?—or fetch those steps, easel, or whatever it is, to lean my back against. Ah, thank you. I think we shall have to have dinner here. And that's your mother, Tom. I'm sure she was a beautiful woman——"

"You see, you can't see *her*, Mr. Barowne; I'm holding it sideways—her picture."

"Of course. But it's well done—you do clutch hold of it—and the oval frame might have just come out of a gilder's shop. I remember once seeing a little portrait just like that in an oval frame."

"I'll fetch my mother, Mr. Barowne; it's over my bed. Shall I?"

"Yes; we'll do the gallery now we've started. But there's no hurry. All right, bring the photos of your aunts and uncles—bring the family album. I'm not thinking of going down for another hour."

"I haven't an album, Mr. Barowne, and I have no family—at least, not to know them. Of course, you know

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I'm not related to Mr. Fairfax; but he is really my father, isn't he?"

"Well, yes; I suppose he is; and he's very lucky. *I* never said any thing against Mr. Fairfax. Wonder if he'd sell you, or let you out on the hire system, to be kept in repairs."

Tom smiled and shook his head.

"Not to be the most famous man in Europe—not if it would make him as famous as the great Pestalozzi, and not for all the big houses of Barnfield. You don't know Mr. Fairfax. Besides, I wouldn't go. That's all settled, you know. It's for always!—whether—whether we find our fortunes or not."

"Well, I don't think he'll lose by you. You're a good lad, Tom, and that picture is deuced like you, except that you seem to have brushed your hair in England. Did you kick those beggars' shins—those chaps that are bagging the ornaments? They look as if you'd been at 'em. It's a clever picture, and it's deuced like you. It's just what I should have done. I should have stuck to my mother. She was the only creature I ever did stick to—may God forgive me! When did you lose your mother, my lad?"

"Nearly three years ago, Mr. Barowne—more than two. I'll go and fetch her!"

. . . . .

"Don't you think I had better fetch somebody, Mr. Barowne? You—you look awful, and Mrs. Barowne may have got back now."

"No! I'm a lot better. I'm all right. Tom Bart

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Brown—Tom Brown, Bart. My God! Four flights of stairs!"

"Yes, and it's my fault. You said you couldn't do it. Oh, Mr. Barowne, you are still as white as a ghost, and——"

"That doesn't matter. You wanted me to be white, didn't you? Have you hung that picture up?"

"Yes."

"Just where it was—over your bed?"

"Yes. Oh, I thought, Mr. Barowne, that you had had a stroke."

"So I had. I've had 'em before, but they never kill me. Nothing kills me. I'm not worth killing. Don't you say a word to Mrs. Barowne; it would upset her. It might make her very ill. Now you won't, Tom? You are an honorable lad. Nor to any body else?"

"No, I won't, I won't, if—if you get all right again. But how will you get down?"

"I shall get down faster than I got up. My God! And the graves were opened! Lady Barowne! She would want to kill me—you too. Four flights of stairs and a ladder. You young Barnfield baronet, you young archbishop, I mean!"

"Oh, I'll fetch her, Mr. Barowne."

"No, Tom, not for my sake. Wait a minute. It's a very beautiful picture, your mother's. Poor Tom! Two years last winter, did you say?"

Tom only nodded; he was too full of anxiety to care for conversation of any kind, and Mr. Barowne's remarks just now gave Tom much cause to fear that his sudden illness had greatly affected his head.

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"And you've been alone in the world—oh, Lord! It was a shock—I mean a stroke; it was nearly a stroke, Tom. I shall go to England—to see a doctor, you know; but I'm d——d if I want the place. It wasn't your fault—climbing up here, you know. Don't stare at me like that. I can't bear it. I'm all right. It does me good to talk. I shall walk about directly. Why don't *you* talk? Say something. Say I've been a base, low blackguard for the last seven or eight years—for bringing myself to this, you know, with the gout and things. I wish I could run, though I'm hanged if I should know where to run to. I'm all right, Tom. I'm all right now. But I would like to hang myself."

"*You* can't help being—being helpless, Mr. Barowne, and it's not—it's not wicked to have the gout and not to be able to run—and—and what good would it do you to run now?"

"Devil a bit, Tom! It wouldn't do *me* any good. I would like to stop with you. I would like you never to leave me. I'm nearly ready, Tom. We'll go down directly. Yes. Sit there again. Heavy? Nonsense! I could carry *you* down in my arms. Yes, put them round me; I like to feel them. I say—I've got fond of *you*, Tom. My poor lad—I won't wrong *you*—not for—for any body's sake. Of course it wasn't your fault, and I'm all right now; you—you couldn't keep off strokes. Yes, it's a beautiful picture, Tom—your mother's—two years last winter?—and you never knew any of your uncles or—or aunts, or any thing, eh?"

"Yes, it was in the winter, Mr. Barowne, for it was

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snowing, and the cemetery was all white, and there was hardly any body there but me. But, you know, I'm happy again now. Why—why are you talking that way now?"

"Well, you know, I—you've been very good to me, Tom; and I went once—I went to my aunt's funeral in the snow! And does Mrs. Nodder know any thing about your mother? About those uncles and aunts, I mean?"

"Yes, I think she does."

"Oh, my God! It's nothing, Tom. It was only a twinge. It's gone—the plotting old hag! I say, are you sure of that?"

"What, Mr. Barowne? You *are* talking funnily—you are talking more funnily than I ever heard you. Sure of what?"

"Oh, it was nothing; you said I was white—so very white, you know. I thought you had overdone it a bit. Haven't you?"

"Well, you are not so white now. I'm not so frightened. Do you say it does you good to talk?"

"It does, Tom. I must talk; the doctors recommend it. It—it keeps the heart going, you know—what there is left of one. And Mr. Fairfax—does he know any thing about you?"

"Oh, he knows every thing, every little thing. He knows a great deal more about me than I know myself. He has talked to Mrs. Nodder for hours just about me, because he loves me so, you know."

"D—nation! Oh, that's the last twinge; it's all over; it came here, but it won't again. It was the last. Come on. God bless you, my boy! I must go to England to-morrow

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to see the doctors, Tom; to prevent a return; but I'm all right. Come on, let me carry you."

"Mr. Barowne!"

"Well, put your arms around me, then. There! *You* sha'n't suffer if I go to the devil; and he would tell every word to my wife. The doctor would, you know; but I'll stop that. Now I'm all right, Tom; come on. I must talk, you know, and I get mixed up. My head's muddled. I—I've had too much of that Yvorne."

"But—Mr. Barowne—I say!"

"Yes?"

"Mustn't I—mayn't—can't I say you've been very ill? Because——"

"Not a word, Tom. It's over. There, there! Could I lift you up and do that"—he gave Tom a kiss—"if I wasn't better?"

"Oh, yes, you are better; you are better in that way. I—I never knew you so well in my life; you—you are as strong as Mr. Fairfax; he lifts me up like that; but—you won't be vexed?"

"Not with you, Tom; not if you jump on my foot. What?"

"You are sure you won't be grieved, because I—I don't want to break my word?"

"Go on—no—I'm past grieving!"

"Well, are strokes—can they—do they ever make people go off their heads, and—and go and do something?"

"Never. It just makes 'em idiots for a quarter of an hour—that's all—quite harmless—and they're better after it. Look here! I'll tell you a secret—if ever you have

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to mention this, I've just had a little attack—just a little, tiny attack of D. T. The doctors understand it, and so does my wife and Mr. Fairfax. You will remember D. T.—'don't tell'! It's nothing to be proud of—but I shall never have another—never had one before from climbing up stairs! Come on! You've saved me. Remember D. T.—'don't tell.'"

"D. T., D. T. I shall remember. It makes you very funny—very funny, but very kind. I didn't know you could be so kind—D. T."

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CHAPTER X

ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCES

Mr. Fairfax had abandoned his idea of quitting Le Bosquet, seeing that all his reasons for so doing had suddenly disappeared. The Barownes were leaving in haste, and great was the commotion throughout the *pension* and in the visitors' minds consequent on this incident.

"Monsieur is flying to England to see his dying father," said some of them. "No, it is to consult some great English doctor; the young monsieur says so," was the account of others. "It is to stop Monsieur Fairfax's little game," averred a third party. "Can we not see that monsieur and his wife are hardly now on speaking terms?" And certainly Mr. and Mrs. Barowne, during the brief packing-up time, did not give any forcible denial to this charge, when one chanced to see them together. They seemed estranged, and were certainly greatly absorbed in their own thoughts, or silent from some trouble.

Mrs. Barowne simply said to Mr. Fairfax that her husband had taken one of his sudden fits for moving, and nothing would stop him. They were going then to Paris; afterward, she had no idea; she did not wish to know. It was nothing new, except that for the first time she was sorry the order had been given for marching. Mr. Barowne had been with Tom to look again at his mother's

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picture—to Tom's bedroom this time. He had chatted and asked questions somewhat in his usual way, but more quietly and with more caution. And while Tom's back was turned he had interested himself in a pair of the boy's knickerbockers, which were thrown over the bed-foot. Ultimately, unseen by Tom, he had put a rather bulky envelope into one of the pockets, where he might very reasonably have supposed it would soon be found, seeing Tom seldom passed half-an-hour awake without feeling in every pocket he had, and turning out a great assortment of indispensable things in addition to what he felt for.

But Mr. Barowne did not notice—or failed to draw any useful inference—that this particular pair of knickerbockers were torn nearly in two, the result of Tom's coming hurriedly down from a tree on the previous day with his cap full of cherries.

The knickerbockers also bore other well-defined marks of the wearer's propensities for kneeling and sitting down suddenly in unselected places. And, as a matter of fact, the pockets had been emptied of every thing not specially tenacious or tangled, such as pieces of nougat, sealing-wax, and string. And Tom had thrown the knickerbockers there preparatory to asking Mr. Fairfax, when the thought should recur at an opportune moment, if they should be mended or permanently discarded. So Mr. Barowne's packet was not found so soon as he thought it would be.

When all the luggage was piled up by the door of Le Bosquet—the landlord and the *garçon* hovering about it without any object (immediate) in a state of painful disquiet, like two jackdaws over their rifled nest—Mrs.

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Barowne, with Tom at her side, took her farewell round of the house and garden.

She mounted the ladder to look at the Juras from the studio window, and sat down in her old nook among the roses, to please herself. And she went to see the two little pigs, Wag's kennel, and other similar places of interest, to please Tom.

She also took her special farewells of many of the visitors, who deplored her departure with a beauty of fervor given only to the French, and sometimes derided in them. The French have keen tongues for foreigners, but they have kind hearts for all,—as many as have other nations,—and they have a way of saying good-by, whether they feel any thing or not, which does one good.

Meanwhile Mr. Barowne and Fairfax were walking up and down under the walnut trees on the open, fenceless road which ran by the gates of Le Bosquet from Neuville, the *pension* being about a couple of furlongs from the little red-tiled, color-washed town, twinkling now with its four-towered château in the sunshine beside the lake.

Mr. Barowne had invited Fairfax in an off-hand way to have a stroll beyond the gates, and they had chatted for some minutes with an easy, men-of-the-world indifference, who were separating after a month's acquaintance, supposed to have been very agreeable.

Fairfax was certain that Mr. Barowne had something particular to say, and Mr. Barowne was determined that Fairfax should regard his remarks as unpremeditated, or, at least, of no immediate importance.

Since Mr. Barowne's visit to the studio he had very per-

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ceptibly altered his manners toward Fairfax. He had appeared to court his society in every spare moment, and had displayed an amount of cordiality which had almost been embarrassing.

In this little stroll they had chatted very easily, and even approached to some semblance of real good-fellowship. Fairfax found himself remembering the many good points of Mr. Barowne, which Tom had daily pressed upon his notice, hitherto, without making much impression; and now, just at the last, seemed inclined to believe he really had some, while he attributed Mr. Barowne's new cordiality to the fact that he was just saying good-by, when a man may permit himself a little effusiveness, because it will not have to be repeated.

He thought that Mr. Barowne was lending himself with wonderful freedom to the genializing influence of a "last cigar," and took him at his humor. It appeared to him that they were rather like two unloving acquaintances of the other sex, who will allow themselves to thaw and say quite nice things over their last cup of tea. The last of things not liked are disliked the least.

"Jolly good idea," said Mr. Barowne, poking his stick in the bark of a tree and leaning against it to rest himself, "planting walnuts where we plant elms; just as handsome and shady. How that little beggar can climb trees! fine claws and nerves."

"Tom? Yes, he has plenty of pluck."

"Yes, that's what I like in him, and I like his darned little natural ways and dirty hands. Not a bit of the model good boy about him, and yet—he's—he's as——"

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"As good as is good for him, I suppose."

"Good! never saw a youngster to touch him. Why, look at him yesterday, scraping his boots with a pocket-knife, and rubbing his hands with pumice-stone for half-an-hour. He said Mrs. Barowne liked to see him tidy. Tell you what, I've got deuced fond of that boy; so has my wife."

"I'm very glad, but I needn't tell him. I think he has found it out."

"Found it out! There's nothing he wouldn't find out. He's a regular terrier at that game. Hanged if the young beggar hasn't found my heart out, and the scent was dry enough. Oh, by-the-bye, Mr. Fairfax, I knew there was something I wanted to tell you, though we shall run against each other again before very long, there's not a doubt."

"Yes?"

"Ah, well, he has no fortune, has he? I hope I don't seem inquisitive, Mr. Fairfax. You will pardon me! But I thought that some day——"

"No; Tom has no fortune except mine," and Fairfax spoke less cordially.

"Now, my dear good fellow, pardon me, we are men of the world. And of course the little chap has blabbed to me as he blabs to every-body, and—well, I'm right down deuced fond of him, and I would like to help him, if—if ever——"

"Oh, thanks, Mr. Barowne; it's awfully kind of you; but I think—I think Tom and I will pull through together without——"

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"Hang it, man, mayn't you die—mightn't you die next week? In the midst of life we are in death. I'm never out of it. That's all I meant. I—I beg your pardon——"

"It's all right—it's all right."

"Everlasting pain makes one very short. I'm awfully sorry. Don't you see my idea, Fairfax?"

"Yes, I do. It's very good of you—very. To tell the truth, I hadn't given that a thought. Poor Tom! He would certainly be in a hole for some little time."

"Well, I would take him—I would take him next week, shot if I wouldn't; and so would my wife. Look here, just give me an address that will always find you—that's what I meant to ask you for—and I'll give you mine. I'll give you my lawyer's. Oh, Lord! my foot. Here, have you a pencil?"

So Mr. Barowne and Fairfax exchanged addresses, after which they walked back to Le Bosquet—Fairfax more thoughtful, though not less well-disposed toward his companion, and Mr. Barowne more chatty even than before, and in a better humor with himself.

Just before they reached the gates Mr. Barowne was again brought to a little standstill by something that recurred to his mind requiring apologies. This time it was Tom who had completely driven the matter out of his head—probably a valid excuse.

"Oh, and of course there is Mrs. Barowne's portrait, Mr. Fairfax. I am greatly obliged to you. We like it very much, though it's a trifle sad—a little bit depressing, you know."

"Yes, perhaps," answered Fairfax. "I'm not exactly a

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portrait-painter, Mr. Barowne. It's really one of my first attempts."

"Ah, just so! Well, it's clever, and my wife likes it, but it's not cheerful—a bit like Mary Stuart on the eve of her execution, don't you know. There ought to have been an axe about, or a guillotine, or something; but it has given her a lot of pleasure. Poor Kate! and I shall get over it. What do I owe you, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Well, I—I intended to do it in a couple of days. Not much, Mr. Barowne."

"Oh, you geniuses are confoundedly unbusiness-like. Now, if I were to sell a horse or a shorthorn, I should want what it was worth to the last brown penny."

"Then let me see. I have been a month, and—you are satisfied with the picture?"

"Oh, leave it to Tom, my dear fellow. Leave it to Tom and me. You are too modest. Mrs. Barowne would not feel complimented to value the picture at the price of paint and so much a day for sticking it on. Tom tells me that your price in St. Jean was twenty francs a portrait. Was it really?"

"Yes, it was; but we did about two every three days."

Mr. Barowne laughed.

"Made them figures, I should think. Well, Tom will hand you over my check; but don't forget to ask him for it."

"That will be right—quite right. And thanks for your kind suggestions. I must drop the guillotines, etc., and have my price for portraits, like Sir John Millais and the rest of them."

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"I should. I think portrait-painting is as fine as any thing for a fellow who does not like to work for his living, you know. I wish I could do it."

Fairfax laughed.

"All right, I'll reform. I have to paint you some day, you know."

"Yes, that's a bargain."

"Well, I'll have my price ready, and I'll paint you just as you are."

"Hanged if you do! Tom's going to see to that. You shall paint me as Tom sees me, if you ever paint me at all. But the devil knows! It's a mad world, my masters!"

So, chatting and laughing, they re-entered the gates of Le Bosquet, seemingly still better friends than when they passed out of them.

And an hour or so later the *voiture*, with Mr. and Mrs. Barowne and the lighter part of their luggage, rolled down the drive, followed by a great final flourish of valedictions from about the doorway, innumerable bowings, raising of hats, waving of handkerchiefs, and a chorus of adieus.

"Here, *cocher!* wait a bit." It was for Tom, who had gone outside the gate to say his last good-by alone.

"Get up and come on with us," said Mr. Barowne. Tom shook his head sadly.

"Mind the wheel, my boy. Don't get your valuable neck broken. I would rather——" Tom was standing on the carriage-step.

"Good-by, madame, good-by; I shall always, always remember you, and love you. This is a portrait of Wag

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and me as we were in St. Jean—Mr. Fairfax has given it me back for you; and these are some of the same roses that are in your picture."

"Thank you, Tom. Good-by!" She gave him a kiss. "We shall meet again, some time. Be famous and a good man. Good-by!"

"Good-by, Mr. Barowne!" Tom held his hand out, and Mr. Barowne shook it very heartily.

"Good-by, my boy; God bless you!" Here he took his purse out and opened it. "Oh, hang it, I haven't a single—— My dear, have you—never mind. Here's a bit of paper, Tom, price of half-a-dozen portraits. Be a good lad. Mind how you get down. Good-by!"

Mrs. Barowne leaned forward to give Tom a final kiss, and her husband gave a grunt of impatience.

"Come, my dear, you've kissed the boy enough. We shall be late, and you've set him crying now, and I—I can't bear it. I'm not at all well this morning, Kate."

"Thank you, Mr. Barowne, I'm n-not crying. What shall I do with it? it's an—nawful lot," and Tom displayed the hundred-franc note, and snuffled.

"Any thing. Mop your face with it. Here, get inside, then; sit there half a second. What do you think *I* shall do without you? Mrs. Barowne hasn't the gout, and a bad temper, and a broken constitution, and—you know. Put that rag by. Kate, you are making a fool of him." (Kate was only looking on.) "Now, good-by! Give *me* a kiss. God bless you! Now, then, jump—quick! Go on, *cocher;* why the deuce don't you go on? My dear, I'm a perfect fool this morning; I'm falling into my dotage."

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And Mr. Barowne emphasized the assertion by making use vigorously of his pocket-handkerchief, alternately waving it to Tom and making vicious dabs at his face.

Mrs. Barowne simply answered, "The darling child!" as she waved her hand to Tom, and looked in wonder from her husband to the boy who had so phenomenally affected him.

So they rolled away, and Tom watched them until the *voiture* turned the corner and disappeared, standing in the middle of the road, with his straw hat in one hand and a hundred-franc note in the other. His eyelashes were wet. His heart was heavy. The warmest hearts are the most grasping, and Tom knew that all Mr. Fairfax's affection, if it were trebled, could not make Madame Barowne's departure any thing but a sad loss.

So he walked slowly back to the house, fingering his hundred-franc note and feeling (like many another plutocrat) that gold is not happiness—but easily might have been.

Tom was ripe for a very long talk on chance, especially the chance of meeting Mrs. Barowne again, and her husband too—who was so funny—so very funny, but kind—so very kind at the last.

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CHAPTER XI

"ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS"

"YES, he is always funny. I can't always understand him; but he is kind, Mr. Fairfax. He has been very kind to me."

"That's right, Tom—speak of a man as you find him. He is fond of you, but *I* don't care for him. Let him drop. And you would like me to keep this four-pound note just as it is?"

"Yes, I would. But, Mr. Fairfax!"

"Well?"

"You won't mind *me* liking Mr. Barowne?—because——"

"Of course not!"

"Because I've—I've got fond of him. It took me a long time—and—and I've done it. I've found him out, you know. He just pretends to be savage, but he never once touched Wag, and he thinks you are a very clever man!"

"So I understand, Tom. By-the-bye, what did he say about my painting when he tipped you that note?"

"Oh, that was his fun. He said it was the price of two or three portraits—those we did at St. Jean, you know; but he loves to go and look at Madame Barowne's picture. He says you have succeeded beautifully. Oh, he *does* love

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her really, and he says he would like to reward you according to your works. Those were his very words. Has he done it, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Yes, he has! Oh, that's all right, Tom. Well, I'll bank this note, then, and pay you interest—that is done with. Now there is something else I want to tell you about—a new idea! But let me think a moment."

In that moment Fairfax thought a great deal. He thought Mr. Barowne was the meanest and most malignant of men, to send him four pounds by Tom, when he had taunted him, or seemed to do so, with not being able to support the boy; and he thought further that those hundreb francs, added to some change in his pocket, would just about pay the bills then due, and leave a sovereign over. He had expected fifteen or twenty pounds at the least!

With these thoughts Fairfax looked up at the green-shuttered, awning-roofed windows of Le Bosquet. Tom and he were lying on the mown grass in the open meadow, two or three hundred yards from the house. A group of haymakers—men, women, and children—were eating their dinner—it was half-past ten—under a big walnut-tree not far away; and their chatter and laughter floated to him in the filmy warm air. They seemed very happy. All around them lay the shimmering landscape in a hundred patches of pleasant colors, dotted with trees, but with never a fence, with the blue tumbling Juras banked up behind, and the lake sleeping at their feet. It was a glorious sight—a boundless world throbbing tranquilly in the warm sunshine, beautiful, buoyant, and brimful of allurements—for the free!

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But George Fairfax was sad; and his soul was chained with melancholy thoughts to Le Bosquet. The sound of the mowers again whetting their scythes, and the jingling of the bells from the oxen-yoked *char* that was passing by the gates, had only a sad sound for him. The blue-bloused *paysan*, puffing his long cigar as he walked past the front of Le Bosquet with a load of the precious water, and stopped to chat with the monsieur who was sitting in Mr. Barowne's old place by the door, only filled Fairfax's mind with disagreeable suggestions; and the lady who had made herself comfortable in Mrs. Barowne's old nook among the roses—where he had planted his easel every day for a month—made him feel as sad and resentful as an Irish peasant after eviction.

He and Tom were now actually the oldest visitors at Le Bosquet, and that day would be accorded to him the place of honor, Mr. Barowne's old place—when he had been well enough to take it—at the head of the table.

But as Fairfax looked at the red-tiled, twinkling roof, running everywhere to gables, and almost touched at many points with the clinging clematis, under which he had been so foolishly happy for the last month, he felt that the blessed repose which had once so folded it round had passed away. He would wake no more there, with a light heart, to the whetting of scythes, and the thrill of blackbirds, and the jangling of innumerable *chars* going to early market. And the life of the long unvariable day, with its bows and *bonjours* at every corner, would now weary him to death, for his work was finished at Le Bosquet.

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True, he might have looked out for work of another kind. There was Madame Bonjour wishful to be painted at the old price, and doubtless several of the visitors would have followed suit. These suggestions were not tempting, though any commissions would have to be executed. But he would not reside any longer at Le Bosquet. The environments forbade it sadly, to say nothing of his exchequer, which reminded him sharply that the little fortune hoarded in St. Jean had been all spent.

So with these thoughts, crystallized in that look at Le Bosquet, Fairfax turned again to Tom, who during this last half-minute had been engaged scratching the earth with his finger-nail and looking at the hole with abstracted resignation, as if he might have thought it a grave!

"Well, this is my idea, Tom. You know we are both well and strong."

"Very; I never ate such a lot in my life, and this jacket is too small for me by now."

"Just so, and rather shabby, and I could do with a new one myself."

"Well, let me buy you one with this four pounds, Mr. Fairfax. Mine is all right when I brush it."

"No, we are well and strong—and we have come away to seek our fortunes?"

Tom nodded.

"And to see the world?"

Tom looked at Le Bosquet, then at the mountains and the lake.

"Yes, Mr. Fairfax."

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"And we are living here like fighting-cocks—like rich tourists, aren't we?"

"I like Neuville, Mr. Fairfax—at least I have liked it. Oh, I have been happy, but I think in St. Jean we saw more of the world, and we worked harder—I mean you did, Mr. Fairfax."

"Well, what should you think of roughing it for a change—live in one room, you know, and go out every day to an hotel for dinner—not always to the same place, you know? That is the fashion with poor students and travellers and geniuses."

"Oh, I *should* like that, Mr. Fairfax, now they—now Madame Barowne has gone. *Where* should we go?"

"Oh, I think we might stay in Neuville a little longer; there are lots of rooms and lots of people who do that."

"Yes; and you haven't been round here at all to paint people on their doorsteps, and I have seen lots of pretty houses and nice faces; and, you know, Mr. Fairfax, we are not famous here a bit yet, as we were in St. Jean. Let us begin soon, will you?"

"Yes; that is just my idea."

"Can we get an attic, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Well, we can get one room, and we can call it an attic. Why?"

"Because so many famous men have lived in attics—haven't they?—before they found their fortunes. Oh, I should like that! But, Mr. Fairfax!"

"Well?"

"Wag!"

"I have not forgotten Wag this time. We must take

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his kennel, and he must be tied up more, while we live in an attic. All the people have gardens in Neuville."

"Oh, yes; and he will always go out with me. Let us go and find an attic now, Mr. Fairfax; we shall have no difficulty—they all know Wag. They know him better than they know us. It will be jolly living in an attic if we can only make Wag comfortable. Mr. Fairfax!"

"Well, Tom?"

"I *am* glad. I'm afraid I should be very sad at Le Bosquet now. I'm not a bit hungry. I—I don't think I could live like a fighting-cock any more for a long time. Every thing looks so—so different—so very still and—and queer—every thing, Mr. Fairfax, except you."

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CHAPTER XII

EN ROUTE

With the insular instinct of his race, Mr. Barowne chose an empty compartment at Neuville, and but for the occasional transit of a gentleman seeking an uncrowded smoking compartment, and of the ticket inspector, that ubiquitous nomad indigenous to Swiss trains, the privacy he had secured was not broken for a long time.

One might have thought that a few fellow-travellers, who there in a first-class compartment would have been quite agreeable and perhaps entertaining, might have been welcome; for Mrs. Barowne silently cut the leaves of her book, and kept her eyes on the pages, as if she meant to brook no interruption, and Mr. Barowne only made general remarks not requiring answers, and invariably derogatory to somebody—the guard, or the Swiss Government, or human nature, or something that troubled *him*.

But forecasts are sometimes deceptive, even when they do not concern the weather.

Mr. Barowne soon had a violent attack of spasmodic coughing, which he explained, with forcible, jerky language, in the intervals he ought to have given to recovering his breath, was owing to the dust shaken out of the mats and cushions.

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At the end of it he looked very white, and put his hand over his left lung, and said it would soon kill him, and he should not mind when it did.

Mrs. Barowne was alarmed, remembering that his last hemorrhage was a very serious one, and not likely to have many successors, but she did not express her sympathy in any voluble or pointed way, because when she did Mr. Barowne became particularly irascible. True, if she had essayed to comfort him by disparaging the gravity of the symptoms, he would have been equally disagreeable. So she only observed that the dust was excessively trying, suggested that he should inhale a cigarette, and assisted in getting one out of his bag.

"I suppose we shall have to change at Neuchâtel, Henry?"

"Of course we shall—if we ever get there—and wait an hour."

"Then I am sure Dijon will be far enough for us to go to-day."

"It won't be far enough for me, Kate. I must go straight on to Paris, whether I am ill or not. Of course, if you are fatigued, you must sleep at Dijon. You wouldn't mind?—you would be all right with Simpson, wouldn't you? But I must get on, Kate. I thought I had made that plain."

"What did Aunt Bella say about your father? I haven't seen the letter. Of course I shall go on if you do. Poor Sir Thomas!"

"Humph! You had better say poor Sir Henry. The

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letter ; no "—Mr. Barowne felt in his pocket—"I'm afraid I've lost it—or else it's in my portmanteau. Yes, I believe it is. She only said what I told you. He is weaker—very much weaker, my poor old dad. I must see him. But it isn't that—that's nothing compared with the other things. Those confounded affairs—they will drive me mad—I'm nearly mad now. I am sure you've cause to know that—and I'm awfully sorry. I am indeed, Kate ; but I can't help it. You don't know what it means, it was sprung on to me so."

Mrs. Barowne sighed.

"No, indeed I don't! What *are* the responsibilities, Henry, if you didn't know of them? and cannot I—cannot you sell some of those Midland shares?"

"Oh, no! no! You are awfully kind, Kate. I don't know how you put up with me. But I'm never out of pain. And I don't mean to be such a brute. You know, you've a wonderful temper, and you've good health. No, that wouldn't help me. It's something that I did, it's some documents and things that I signed a long time ago. And now they've all come out. It was nothing wrong, nothing wrong in itself, Kate; but the responsibilities are awful, and until I got those letters I had no idea of them. They want to make out that there is a question of *false pretences*——"

Mrs. Barowne started.

"Not criminal, Kate ; nothing of that kind. There 'll be no policemen in the business. Don't be ridiculous. I've been a mad, wild fool in my day, but not fool enough for that. But it would be an awful mess ; it would be a dis-

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grace—to our name, I mean. And *you* would have to bear it. That's what I'm thinking about. And you've borne too much—what people would say. And it wasn't my fault. I mean I didn't know what I was signing, and what it would lead to."

"What can it lead to? What did you sign?"

"Oh, I could never explain it all to you. You—you couldn't understand it, not now. But in Paris I shall get a telegram—it may be there before we are—and then I shall know the worst."

Mrs. Barowne sighed heavily, but she made no comment. Her perplexity was as great as her distress, but patience had become her pervading virtue, the inviolable spell and charm to which she owed all her victories, many and great.

"Old Barnes is looking into it. I wrote him a long letter, and gave him all particulars. I might have heard now if I had wired, but I wouldn't run any risk. He will keep it close enough; that old lawyer's safe has a good many skeletons in it. It all depends on the dates of some transactions. Those things I signed, you know. I will try to explain it, but not now. I never intended to mention it till I got the telegram. I have been more of a brute than usual."

"Very well. I will wait, Henry, if you wish; but this is the greatest shock you have ever given me."

"Then, God help me!" said Mr. Barowne, "you may soon get a greater." But as he only spoke in a low voice to the window-curtain, his wife did not hear.

She only heard a muttering—such as she often heard,

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not wholly with regret, when her husband lost his politeness in a struggle to choke his temper.

And so the subject was dropped, and the long journey to Paris—when the changing at Neuchâtel was over—became less and less, till the bright blue sky grew smoky in the west, and broke into crimson flames above the setting sun. And then the sun was buried, and the sombre purple clouds clustered around his grave, till the black ones came and hid them. Then the funereal stars came out like altar-lights, and the melancholy moon looked down on her dead rival's grave and smiled. And her smile threw a pearly light on the trailing garments of the fickle clouds that were flying fast from the grave of another forgotten day.

And Mrs. Barowne looked no more out of the carriage window, for the light of the lamp was growing too strong within, and her thoughts were coming nearer and nearer home.

She had been greatly impressed by her husband's unwonted attentions, and by the strain of gentleness, even tenderness, which he had exhibited—with only a few trivial outbursts of irascibility—during the last few hours.

His frankly-avowed determination to conquer his vile temper, and "be a decent, reasonable sort of being to live with, when this confounded affair was settled," had struck Mrs. Barowne as a very heroic and welcome resolution. But when he went the length of suggesting that they should be married again, to mark the advent of this new and better epoch, as he had heard of people doing who were going to lead quite a new married life, Mrs. Barowne

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had been surprised indeed. However, she refrained from smiling, to save her husband, in these new poses of domestic virtue and lofty resolution, from tumbling into ludicrity and hurting himself with the fall.

Despite her husband's disclaimer of any pecuniary want, Mrs. Barowne believed she would shortly be allowed to liquidate another large sum of her private fortune on Mr. Barowne's behalf. His previous ways of receiving such favors, after petulant asseverations that he did not want them, confirmed her in this belief; and the unusual excitability which had accompanied this last avowal of "responsibilities" Mrs. Barowne shrewdly attributed to their unusual magnitude.

They certainly puzzled her, and rather alarmed her, but her education had not been contracted in such matters, and if she still loved her husband it was not because she had kept intact and unsullied that fair ideal of the man which she had formed in her brief courtship, and cherished through the honeymoon and a little later.

She associated these responsibilities in some way—essentially a woman's way—with baccarat and bad companions, and found no difficulty in relegating them to a past of which she now knew something, and of which she wished to know as little more as possible.

Mrs. Barowne was prepared to sacrifice every thing she possessed for her husband's peace of mind. But she had no intention of being married again as a reward for the sacrifice, or to signalize the beginning of a better epoch, however much she appreciated the frame of mind which prompted her husband to make the suggestion.

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Mr. Barowne, however, had made the proposition in deadly earnest, though he had deferred to do so until they were nearing Paris, when there were several other travellers in their compartment, whose inability to understand a word of English Mr. Barowne had made sure of by a large and varied display of cordiality and hypocrisy.

Every thing indeed depended, as he had said, on the dates of some transactions. If Mrs. Barowne had dreamed of the real nature of these transactions, she would not have met them in advance so heroically as she did.

This was the telegram which her husband received in Paris :

"Violet Gladys B—— died at 7 St. Philip's Terrace, Barnfield, on November 3, '87. B. married again on December 2, '87. A widower one month. Certificates following.

"C. J. Barnes."

And this telegram simply meant, among other things, that Mrs. Barowne was only a lawfully wedded wife by chance.

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CHAPTER XIII

"ALL MEN ARE LIARS"

In Switzerland it often rains, but one forgets it, because the skies do not sulk and scowl when they can't rain. They are content to be bright—often for weeks together.

It had rained during the night—in mountain fashion; and Neuville looked as if all the fire-engines in the republic had played upon it, and every *paysanne* in that canton had followed them with mops.

But the rain and the sun had done it all within a few hours, and Neuville looked at its best—except that one might have thought it had no inhabitants.

The white pigeons fluttered up and down between their innumerable nests in the roof of the Casino and the big white-bouldered square, which flashed in the sunlight, opposite the Hôtel de Ville, as if the town belonged to them, and not to the five thousand people who were then at dinner.

When the town clock, from its red-tiled, yellow-washed little tower, at one entrance to the square, announced merrily that it was twelve o'clock, Neuville withdrew behind its green shutters and vine-clad doorways, and the shopkeepers closed their doors, or the bottom part of them, with a jingling of bells—not as a safeguard against larceny, but as a protest that they would not be disturbed.

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And when the old gray *Église nationale*, from its big-dialled clock, said sombrely that the half-hour had gone, they would come out again (the men smoking cigars) to go into each other's shops to talk, and to sell each other and occasional strangers any thing they wanted, with as much leisurely conversation pertaining to other matters as the occasion would possibly allow.

There may be no commercial morality left in the world, nor pleasure in doing business; but shopkeeping in Neuville, off a market day, seemed an innocent thing, and certainly not trying.

The old woman who sold fruit under the shadow of the great château, now the town school, had gone to sleep; and the zigzag, gabled lines of many-colored houses, all with green shutters, in the narrow, winding street by the château, seemed to have gone to sleep also, and to be in great danger, as they leaned forward, of falling into each other's arms, and scattering down the red flower-pots, blazing with flowers, from their bedroom window-sills.

Only the steaming, sweating horses of the *diligence*, standing at the post-office, showed any signs of toil and fatigue and worry, and perhaps Monsieur le Conducteur, big with responsibility, as he caught the boxes and parcels from the blue-bloused *facteur* at the door, and piled them up on the roof of the coach, with a good many words and innumerable gestures, also sounded a jarring note in that sphere of blessed quiet.

But the *diligence* would be off directly. It was not part of Neuville; and with a shout here through an open

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door, and a greeting there to a girl on the lookout, and the running out and back again of the banker's clerk to put a letter into the box behind the vehicle as it rolled away, the *diligence* would disappear and its jangling bells would die away in the drowsy air; and Neuville would go to sleep again till the cool of the evening roused it up to be gay.

But things are not always so tranquil and sunshiny as they seem.

Tom came out of a doorway in the Rue du Lac with a very thoughtful face, and took hardly any notice of Wag, who had bounded out a second earlier and bumped his head and described three circles and jumped half-a-dozen times toward Tom's nose before he succeeded in getting tripped and kicked under his master's feet and was sober enough to lick them. Tom apologized to Wag, but he did not stop to look at the *diligence* horses, or exchange a word with the conductor. He walked on slowly between those old nodding houses under the quiet strip of blue sky, a solitary, sober little figure among the deep shadows and the silence.

At the end of the street was a confectioner's shop. There seemed to be nothing in the window but a collection of loaves, in number out of all proportion to variety, and a few very poor specimens of French pastry, the antiquity of which was doubtful, though the unwholesomeness was evident enough.

But Tom stopped opposite the window, putting his nose as near to it as the brim of his straw hat would allow, and surveyed the *pâtisserie* with kind and discriminating attention.

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He was only about a fortnight older than when he wished ardently to live in an attic; but his yearnings were satisfied. He was a reasonable boy, and would have been content now, even inclined, to try a mansion. Grown-up people are not so easily convinced that their hobbies are foolish. And this was notwithstanding the fact that Wag had been made very comfortable, and had got quite used to being fastened up when Tom was doing his lessons, or was busy with the palette and brushes—an occupation which of late had been something of a sinecure. At this moment Tom held Wag's collar and cord in his hand. The dog had just dined and was going for a constitutional. But Tom had not—neither had Mr. Fairfax, for whom Tom was now waiting. That event—a very important one, dinner—was just at hand.

Presently Tom turned away from the stale *pâtisserie* and walked slowly back, still in meditation; and a second later Mr. Fairfax made his appearance. He too stepped into the Rue du Lac as if he had not left all care behind him. But as he met Tom he began to twirl his stick round and whistle the *ranz des vaches.*

"Oh, here you are, Tom. I forgot to tell you I have to dine with the school-master again to-day."

"Have you, Mr. Fairfax? I wish he would ask *me* sometimes. But I don't like him—a bit."

"No! You used to when he came up to Le Bosquet."

"Oh, yes. But he has altered since—since we've lived in our attic. Why do you go so often? I think I know, Mr. Fairfax."

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"Do you? Well, it *is* cheap, and he likes to talk English, you know. Here are your two francs, Tom. Dine handsomely, my boy, and give your mind to it. How is old Le Bosquet looking? I must go with you, I think, to-morrow."

"Yes, you haven't been for a week. Does Monsieur Vautier give good dinners?"

"Rattling!"

"And good wine?"

"Excellent!"

"As many courses as we get at Le Bosquet?"

"Oh, more, and nicer!"

"Then I'm glad you're going, because you—you have nearly lost all your appetite."

Fairfax laughed and explained to Tom that he could never eat much in hot weather during the day, and that the suppers at the Hôtel de France were even better than Monsieur Vautier's dinners.

And Tom listened—in silence for the most part, though he deigned between times to scoff and marvel at Neuville by turns for ignoring the fine arts in preference for good living and *al fresco fêtes*, as he chanced to be moved by his companion's skits and his own grave reflections; but he altogether refused to be cheered up. He had something evidently on his mind. Very soon they came to the end of the town where their paths parted, and Tom went on under the line of walnuts which led to Le Bosquet, and Mr. Fairfax, with a final merry injunction touching Tom's dinner, began to mount the narrow road which turned off and wound up a steep hill-side. It was a hot, dusty, steep

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path, without a shadow, between the only walls that mar Swiss roads—the walls of the vineyards.

Dumb nature can be as ironical as man :

Fairfax was in low spirits. His health was out of tone from irregular and poor living. He was full of anxiety, and what he needed now was soothing thoughts or words—if words ever did soothe. But he had to laugh, and the sunshine burned and bored him, and the sweet, cool-looking verdant vineyards which hemmed him round, sloping up from the blue lake to the blue sky—one soft green velvet carpet—only mocked him with visions of repose.

He could see no rest ahead—nothing but going on doggedly—with every door that looked inviting shut, just as the doors beside the locked wells and closed lodges of that hot, steep, dusty road with its stone walls were shut and guarded with the ever-repeated caution, "*Il est défendu d'entrer les vignes.*" But in a quarter of an hour or so Mr. Fairfax had cut through that section of the vineyards, and gained what to the traveller there in hot weather was an oasis in a desert of green leaves. This was La Grotte, Monsieur Vautier's school, with a little farm adjoining.

Two tall, lopped, leafless trees stood like forbidding janitors at the gate. But near to them grew a clump of branching chestnuts, making a green roof for a big stone trough of crystal water, which trickled out of the wall.

That looked inviting ; and Fairfax sat down on the edge of the trough—after he had drunk—with his back to the short, shady, steep drive leading to La Grotte, a low-roofed, spreading-out, comfortable-looking place, where he was *not* going to dine. He had not once dined there,

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though it was true that Monsieur Vautier liked to talk English with him, or what passed for English.

He was an agreeable little man, only a trifle too thrifty (for his pupils) and pedantic (for those who were not).

Fairfax did not dislike him; but he disliked the idea which Monsieur Vautier had not very obscurely thrown out. It amounted to this—that board and lodging might be found at La Grotte for Tom and himself, with education for the former, and even accommodation for Wag, in return for Fairfax's teaching English, arithmetic, writing, the due observance of authority, punctuality, and a few other useful things, during seven or eight hours a day.

Fairfax did not like the idea, consequently it recurred to his mind every hour of the day. And every day other and stronger reasons than repugnance pressed the idea more and more into view.

Neuville positively refused to take any more paintings, but politely consented to take every thing else that the painter had. And it nearly had done so! Neuville was not like St. Jean; but, in Tom's own words, they were likely soon to be "famous there also"—for impecuniosity.

With these thoughts, Fairfax resumed his tramp, bearing down by the lake to the town, on the side furthest from Le Bosquet. The path was pleasanter now, being downhill, and soon passed through a little wood.

Here the diner-out stretched himself on the grass and dined *à l'aise*—not exactly alone, for there was a squirrel near, dining leisurely with fastidious discrimination on a wild-cherry tree; and Fairfax threw some bits of his bis-

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cuits under the tree to see if the squirrel would fetch them. But it did not, and Fairfax reflected that it was wise not to eat the bread of strangers, and compromise its independence. Then he mused upon the glory of liberty, only to remember that even that very squirrel was perhaps in chains—chained invisibly but securely to a tree close by, with a secret hollow in the fork, warm and downy, where some beautiful, beady-eyed, furry mites were wriggling together, to pull the chain—to pull it incessantly and imperiously—like a despot pulling a bell! He knew that if driven to it by them that frisking, free little squirrel would come for his crumbs and almost eat out of his hand. So the squirrel did Fairfax good, though she would not amuse him. He turned his eyes again in the direction of La Grotte, and thought about Monsieur Vautier's eighteen boys.

He had seen them in detachments in the town, and collectively at La Grotte, when the prizes were given away a month ago. Then they had performed gymnastics very creditably, and played *al fresco* games, and danced in the *salon* very prettily with the young ladies who had come in a body from a *pensionnat des demoiselles* near, and enjoyed the entertainment immensely.

Tom had then voted the school very superior to any in Barnfield, had zealously learned the Swiss outdoor games, danced himself to fever heat, and subsequently grown lymphatic, taciturn, and sighful beyond record, from his unwavering constancy to raspberry vinegar and iced *meringues*.

But Mr. Fairfax had observed the boys on other occa-

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sions (and so had Tom now), and he did not appreciate a master's post in La Grotte.

The boys, German-Swiss, French-Swiss, Italian, and English (when the school was fortunate enough to have English pupils), were of all ages from eight to eighteen, and the elder ones gave themselves considerable airs, most of them carrying revolvers (secretly), and consuming a great deal more tobacco than was good for them (openly). For the most part they were learning languages, and some of them could display a familiarity with words and phrases which are not found in school dictionaries, and are not absolutely necessary anywhere else.

All things considered, Fairfax disliked adding another foreign and perhaps disturbing element to that too mixed community. But before he had eaten his last biscuit he had made up his mind to do so.

And so, when some little time had elapsed—not enough for a dinner with many courses and good wines—Fairfax again set off for his room, his step so much the lighter for the weight of indecision he had shaken off.

At the far end of the Rue du Lac, the farther end from Le Bosquet, he came upon Tom very unexpectedly—Tom usually lingered (for Wag's benefit) with the visitors at his old quarters, or out on that side of the town.

Moreover, Tom's movements, before he became aware that Mr. Fairfax was at his elbow, seemed to call for investigation.

He came out of the watch-maker's shop, leading Wag by his cord, and was walking promptly—it seemed rather defiantly—into the Hôtel de France. One thing only was

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clear—he was not "on pleasure bent," and when Wag (who had first caught sight or scent of Mr. Fairfax) dexterously coiled himself twice round his master's legs and then tried to spin him with a jerk as if he had been a top, Tom stooped down in the doorway of the *hôtel* and began to unwind himself with patient gravity, speaking words of tender remonstrance and affection, as if his only concern was that Wag should not blame *him*.

In this predicament Fairfax caught him by the arm.

"What's the game? What are you up to?"

"Oh, Mr. Fairfax, where have you come from?"

"I've come from La Grotte; but you, my young adventurer—have you been selling your watch for a drink? What's the matter—Tom—my boy? what is it?"

But Tom could not speak for tears, which had suddenly overcome him. He had set himself at liberty by unfastening Wag's collar, who had gratefully licked his hands and face during the operation, and left the marks of dusty paws all over his jacket. And now, as some apology for delay, Tom busied himself in effacing these impressions—rubbing them with his wet handkerchief, and then rubbing the dirt about his eyes.

"Let us go in, Mr. Fairfax—and—and I'll tell you. Let us go—go away—I—I hate Neuville, and the Swiss are not honest—they are not good—they are very polite; but they are not good—they are—are bad—they are liars, Mr. Fairfax—they—they are all great big liars! liars!"

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CHAPTER XIV

"LIKE A FIGHTING-COCK AGAIN"

"Now, Tom; now let me have it, and I'll punch their heads. What have they said? But first pitch me one of those cigars—the expensive ones—the penny ones—and put your handkerchief by for good."

"Well, you know, Mr. Fairfax, they said—they—they all said that Wag was the most wonderful dog they had ever seen."

"Well, that was honest enough."

"But they—they said he was very valuable—they were sure he was a very, very rare one—and—and very valuable—didn't they?"

"Well? Perhaps they thought so."

"But they didn't—they didn't, that's it—they—they are great big liars, and—and bad people!"

"What were you doing with Wag in his leash? And why, in the name of wonder, were you going into the Hôtel de France? You haven't told me that."

"Well, Mr. Fairfax, I—I know we are very poor. You have tried to hide it—you are always good; but I know we are—and I—I am a very great expense, and I know we are as near having the bailiffs as we can be. But what could they take?"

"Oh, get out the cards, Tom, or let us have a talk about

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chance. So you thought Wag was in danger, and wanted to lend him to the watch-maker for a week or two. No bailiff will meddle with Wag, Tom."

"Oh, no, no, Mr. Fairfax." Tom again produced his wet, dust-streaked handkerchief and further besmeared his face, shaking his head solemnly.

"You know how I love Wag?"

"Yes."

"But I love you a thousand times more. You know that?"

"Of course I do."

"And I've been—I've been into every shop in Neuville."

"What?"

"To sell him, Mr. Fairfax. Oh, my poor Wag! But not—not one person would buy him, because—they are all liars; and some of them laughed a great deal, and I called them *menteur* to their faces."

Fairfax put down his cigar and took Tom on to his knee.

"My poor little chap! Well, I'm glad they wouldn't. And you did that for me?"

"Why, look what you've done for me, Mr. Fairfax, and for Wag too, ever since he left Barnfield in that hamper. And they would have been kind to him; at least I thought they would then. But I—I shall never trust them any more."

Tom again twitched out his handkerchief from the pocket in his knickerbockers; but this time it was not to besmirch his face. He began to untie a very big and complicated knot which he had made in one corner, and

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to this operation he gave absorbing attention, dexterously using both his hands and teeth.

He might have been performing a conjurer's trick, save that the impatience and excitement were all on the performer's side.

"But see, Mr. Fairfax, I have saved that." A few francs had been finally worked into Tom's fist through a hole in the handkerchief. "Six francs—it's my three last dinners except a franc and a half. I spent that at the *pâtissier's*—half a franc a day—and I dined luxuriantly, Mr. Fairfax. You are not vexed with me?"

Fairfax took the six francs, and settled Tom more comfortably on his knee and nearer to him.

"Well, I don't know, Tom"—but Tom knew, perfectly; "what about the English character for truthfulness? It seems something like the Swiss."

"Oh, no, Mr. Fairfax, no. I wouldn't say your pictures were worth a thousand francs if I didn't think it. And you've been cheating *me*. You only go sometimes to the Hôtel de France for supper. I've found that out—and I haven't told lies. They were only what I've heard you call—what I've heard you call tic-tacs."

"Tactics."

"Yes, tactics. What *are* tactics, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Dodges."

"Yes, that was my dodge—because—because, you know, you wanted me to be—you wanted me to have all the happiness to myself. And I won't, Mr. Fairfax. You know, I'm not—I'm no longer quite such a little boy as you think. You forget. We've been on our travels now

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eleven weeks and a half, and I know a great deal of French, and I'm getting to know the world. And I know now—I know that a great many nice people—grown-up people—are liars. That has surprised me very much, Mr. Fairfax. I am very sorry, but I'm glad that I know it."

"Well, yes, Tom." Fairfax spoke very cheerfully. "But never mind. And you *have* dined to-day?"

Tom sighed heavily and nodded assent.

"Luxuriously?" Fairfax passed his hand over the region from whence the sigh emanated—a gastronomic sigh of unequivocal significance.

"Oh, don't, Mr. Fairfax." Tom doubled himself up and laughed. "I've—I've—I had to give a big piece of *gâteau* to Wag because I had paid for it."

"Very well, then, get the cards out for half-an-hour. Then you must do your Latin, and to-night we will have supper together at Le Bosquet. I'm not half so poor as you think I am, and painting is not the only thing that I can do. I've a new idea. I think we have had enough of an attic, Tom. I think we have bottomed that phase of life. And we *must* see the world. I've a new idea, and I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. Only wait till to-morrow. Now deal away, Tom."

"All right, Mr. Fairfax, I will wait till next week if you like. I'm very happy again. Whatever you want to do will be right—I know it will—because—because it always is; and we are both very well and strong—at least I mean you are very strong still; and I am very well—I—I feel quite like a fighting-cock again—and I am very, very happy, Mr. Fairfax!"

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"Well—deal away."

"But I want to ask you——"

"Well?"

"Wag, you know—they are all liars, but, I mean—well, I'm very glad they are."

"What?"

"For me, you know—for us—for you and me and Wag. I am very glad now to think that nobody would ever buy him, and that—that he is only a valuable dog to us—because it isn't my fault."

Tom remained very happy for the rest of the day. He was in high spirits and great good-humor during the supper at Le Bosquet, charming the hearts of the visitors—he had not seen them for four days—with many allusions and kind enquiries touching their arrivals and departures, their ailments, their children, and their domestic pets, their views of life from Neuville in particular, and their general proposals for taking the world.

But after supper Tom grew more reflective again. He was always at his best for right down deep thinking after meals—a phenomenon which philosophers can explain without discredit to the dinner or the diner, though there are those who only philosophize when dyspeptic, who explain it otherwise, blaming every thing and every-body they can.

In that equably solid state of mind Tom began to write a letter to Mrs. Nodder, which he concluded the next day, and posted without showing it to Mr. Fairfax.

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"RUE DU LAC 27, NEUVILLE, CANTON VAUD,
"LA SUISSE, 4 Août.

"MY VERY DEAR MRS. NODDER:

"That is the proper beginning of a Swiss letter. You will be pleased that I know it. But of course I shall write to you in English. You need have no fear that I shall forget English. And I have now read your beautiful present through. I was sorry Rudolph died when he was a little boy, because I think he would have been a good man, and perhaps famous. I liked the tame jackdaw the best; so did Mr. Fairfax. I liked to read about him stealing things and swearing, and I am very glad he did not die when he was scalded. I do not think it is right to make every thing that we love die—I mean in books—because they don't, you know. Wag is very well, so is Mr. Fairfax, and so am I.

"Well, I must now tell you that I have seen a great deal more of the world. And travel is not all nice; some of it is very sad. It is sad, my dear Mrs. Nodder, to find out that many grown-up people are liars, and seem very nice. I think that is the saddest thing I have discovered—except partings. Partings are very sad, but they can't be helped. And lies can—I mean in nice people, you know.

"Mr. Baronne has written to Mr. Fairfax—a week ago—to say they had a pleasant journey, and to ask how we are. It was very nice of him, and I wrote him a letter, because Mr. Fairfax was busy.

"My dear Mrs. Nodder, the world is full of change! We have no rest here—I don't mean in Neuville, I mean

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everywhere. To-morrow once more again we go out into the wide world. We are going into another phase—we have bottomed this one and I am very glad. We have been poor scholars—we have tasted poverty; but we have now bottomed it and are very well.

"This has made me think very much about chance—that is, the work of the angels. Did I tell you that in my last letter? because it is, and they let us help them, whenever they can. Mr. Fairfax says we shall never get any farther than that—and it seems nice—only I wish we could prove it. Because, you know, every-body does not believe in chance—I didn't once—and every-body does believe in the angels—even little children, though they have never lost any body they love like their mothers, and are not obliged to believe in them—unless they like.

"I see now why the angels made us bring the picture of my mother and me—and they let us help them; and they had to do with Mrs. Baronne being painted—because she saw it. Do you see? They let her help them, and still they are going on. Mr. Fairfax says the picture of Mrs. Baronne is the very greatest work he has ever done; and he has put his name on it in big letters, and Mr. Baronne was very nearly reformed when he went away, if not quite.

"That was all the work of the angels; but, my dear Mrs. Nodder, that four pounds is gone. I am glad you liked the pictures of the Swiss costumes, and the photograph of the great Pestalozzi blessing his little children. He was then very poor. We are very poor now, but the

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dark clouds are going! A new phase is before us, but my best knickerbockers look very old! My dear Mrs. Nodder, can you lend me two sovereigns, without telling any body, by a post-office order? This is for a secret. It is to surprise Mr. Fairfax, because he pampers me. He would never let me ask for it; but I think he will not be angry if I get it, because he is very kind. I shall pay you back, dear Mrs. Nodder, when I am a man, if not before; so please send it by return of post.

"I must now conclude. This is the last letter I shall write as a poor scholar, because I have no more paper, and the new phase begins to-morrow.

"I often think about Barnfield, and I am glad I am not there; but we shall meet again—I mean you and me. I pray for you every night, and I hope Mr. Patterwell does not give you so much trouble. I have heard of a clergyman who is just like him, and Mr. Barowne's father's butler got drunk under him every night for forty years. Yet I believe he was a good man. I have discovered that there are some people—besides clergymen—that nobody else takes any notice of. But I would not tell Mr. Patterwell that.

"I am sorry that Mr. Diggle has begun again to come into our kitchen, and that you have made it up. I do not send him back any kind regards. My dear Mrs. Nodder, all is not gold that glitters: I tell you this because I love you and I have discovered it.

"*J'ai l'honneur d'être,*

"*Votre dévoué,*

"TOM BART BROWN.

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"*P. S.*—I put that in because I know it, and you will be pleased. But it is like subscribing yourself in England, and it is not done by people who love each other. Please don't forget the two sovereigns.

"Your loving little friend,

"T. B. B.

"*P. S. Number* 2.—It is settled about the new phase. It was settled last night. We are going into a Swiss school —in half-an-hour—and Wag too, to see the world there. Please send the two sovereigns to 'La Grotte, Neuville, Canton Vaud, La Suisse.'

"T. B. B."

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CHAPTER XV

"THE NEW PHASE"

"DON'T apologize, Mr. Fairfax. Don't apologize, whatever you do; because I should do it again, and you would get to know."

They were in their bedroom at about nine o'clock on the evening of their third day at La Grotte. Tom had retired for the night, and Mr. Fairfax had sought this one place of indoor seclusion for a little of Tom's society. He was going to take a long walk shortly to "think things over." There was need for it; for Tom's reiterated injunction had reference to a matter which already had produced a grave crisis in their "new phase" of life.

"We can go to St. Jean again. We can *walk* there. And I've told them all we sha'n't apologize. See, Mr. Fairfax. Letouf did those—the new ones—but of course that's nothing. We kicked each other. I *had* to kick. They don't use their fists at all, Mr. Fairfax." And Tom protruded his barked and bruised shins as he sat on the edge of the bed, with pardonable pride in such unmistakable records of battle. "Those are the new ones, those three," he said, holding on to sundry articles of apparel with one hand and dropping candle-grease on sundry others which lay on the floor, as he held the light in the best position for displaying his wounds and looking at them himself.

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"They look rather bad, Tom. Let's wash them, and we must get some plaster."

"Oh, that's nothing. We kicked each other, and he's not very big. We are friends now—Letouf and me. And he says, Mr. Fairfax, that Courte is a big savage beast, and the biggest bully that was ever born, and he wishes you had killed him. He says the Swiss law would defend you. Mr. Fairfax, let us *walk* to St. Jean. We are famous there, and we can paint people for *ten* francs. We have the things, you know."

"Well, I must think," answered Fairfax; and thereupon he sat down again on the edge of his bed, and fell to thinking so profoundly that he forgot all about Tom's bruises, and was only reminded Tom was in the room by his going about on tip-toe, and finally kicking over the wash-hand bowl in his efforts at self-effacement.

Fairfax had to render prompt assistance then, but he soon retired again; and Tom continued to attend to his injuries, unassisted and unnoticed, satisfied that Mr. Fairfax had obeyed his injunctions to "go on thinking."

Now the circumstances which had led to this crisis were very commonplace, and not at all complex.

Courte, who was seventeen years old, had thought to amuse himself by torturing Tom a little in a disciplinary fashion. He had pulled his ears and called him "a little English beast" for the sake of studying the contortions and temper of the said little beast under provocation.

Tom grinned and wriggled and retaliated in bad French, with some mild aspersions on foreign beasts, with a personal application. Then he was pinched harder, and

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wriggled more violently without retaliations. But Courte's experiment was only beginning. Tom was made angry, and finding he was unable to keep the tears out of his eyes, he grew angrier still. In this frame he was asked, with another pinch and the stock epithet of "little English beast," if he would tell Mr. Fairfax; and Tom said "No" promptly, adding, with a glance round at the small spectators, "because if I did he would break your head, and you are a bully"—a word for which he had learned the French equivalent before he had been at La Grotte two hours. This amused Courte. He was really beginning to get the kind of enjoyment he wanted. So he stooped down and remarked calmly with new torture that "Mr. Fairfax was a big English beast." Then Tom's eyes shot fire and he clenched his fists.

Courte now found the amusement keen. He grew yet calmer, and put his face more provokingly near Tom's face than ever, repeating his opinion, and forthwith Tom struck the *jeune monsieur's* aggressive nose such a violent blow that it altered its conformation and made it bleed very profusely—so much so that the young gentleman was pronounced later to have been weak from loss of blood.

But Courte did not appear weak then. He exerted himself in a way which French boys seldom show—except in the gymnasium—to correct Tom's manners, and Tom went on encouraging him to persevere. The result was that in a very short time Tom lay prostrate—but unrepentant—from a veritable baptism of blood. For the most part it was the blood which Tom had brought upon his own head

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out of his antagonist's. Finally, Courte left his victim on the gory field and went to wash his face.

And it so chanced that Mr. Fairfax passed the scene of the combat a minute later, and was hailed by a chorus of "Courte! Courte!" with brief indications from half-a-dozen little fingers pointed in one direction of Courte's whereabouts. He just lifted Tom's head up and looked at him. Tom was inarticulate; but his hair and his face, his clothes and his hands were eloquent.

He began: "Mr. Fa—Fair——" But Mr. Fairfax had gone.

He went away at a great rate, carrying his walking-stick in unwalking-stick fashion, and he came upon Courte just when he had succeeded in partially staunching his wound, and wholly removing the stain, in a quiet place where the cattle were wont to drink.

Courte met his tutor with a polite bow. But Fairfax took hold of his coat-collar. The young gentleman wrenched himself away, glared, and said "he would be pleased to give Mr. Fairfax satisfaction." He was a romantic boy, though a bully. However, Tom's champion did not seem inclined to wait. He settled the matter there and then, to the awed rapture of the small spectators who had come to see it done.

Hence the crisis. Courte was a very big boy, and not one of the most truthful. He denied calling Mr. Fairfax "a big English beast"—Tom's one charge, apology, and defence—only admitting the words had been used as a circumlocutory phrase in a playful argument; and this statement was corroborated by one of the small spectators with

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shaking knees. Mr. Fairfax was told that boys at La Grotte could never be corrected in the fashion he had adopted; and left to infer that Monsieur Vautier would lose one hundred pounds a year if Courte left the school, while he was plainly informed that this result would speedily follow if an apology were not tendered within three days. All that information was imparted in elegant French, with exquisite taste; but in English it meant simply that if his resignation were tendered in preference to an apology by Mr. Fairfax, he and Tom would quit La Grotte the same day. And now the period of grace would expire to-morrow morning. Courte would again enter the school—from the seclusion which the pretext of indisposition had allowed him to sulk in.

The issue could not be deferred; but Tom stoutly suggested no capitulation and a walk to St. Jean. Fairfax had learned a good deal in that half-hour with the squirrel; but he had not prepared himself for this.

Pride is an expensive thing; but every-body keeps a little—about the same quantity—from prime ministers to penny-a-liners; and one has to mouth, and fool, and fence for it as much as another. We have only different costumes and a different theatre; and the great, seething, struggling world outside the doors doesn't care a broken button for our pride or us—if they ever hear of them. They are as wise as we are. Every one of them knows that Galileo was a fool, that the world does not go round the sun, but round *him;* that he is the centre of the solar system, and that it will not have another in his lifetime.

Conforming to the rule, then, Fairfax kicked desper-

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ately against the pricks. But he only hurt himself; and even the gallant-spirited Tom, with his dreams of St. Jean flooded with ten-franc portraits, failed to get a flicker of romantic hope out of George Fairfax's heavy heart.

Any other kind of flicker would have done; and he might have raised one himself—if there had been time. But what could he do by to-morrow morning? If he had a week only, he might become a great painter, by using a great brush and painting window-frames, etc.—a method for advancement which has been prescribed by an art-critic. But to-morrow morning!

So, sitting on the edge of his own bed, with his hands in his pockets, he had sunk again into the sombrest depths of thought. Meanwhile Tom had been industriously applying such remedies to his newly barked shins as his own wits and the meagre pharmacy at his disposal would allow.

"There, Mr. Fairfax, see!" He stood before him, scantily attired, with his hands and his legs, from the knees downward, white with a thick lather of soap. "I'm going to scrape it off except all in front, and then put my stockings on. It will be as good as soap-plaster, and I sha'n't take them off for a week. You won't apologize?"

"Why don't you want me to apologize, Tom?"

"Because it would be for *me*. And we can walk to St. Jean. That's what I've put this on for; and, Mr. Fairfax!"

"Well?"

"This phase has been a mistake, but it hasn't cost much, and we know now what a Swiss school is—when it

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is not a board-school, like that at the château. It's a bad place, it's a dirty hole, and I'm glad we've bottomed it. How far would two sovereigns go, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Oh, they would go a long way just now. Why, Tom?"

"Oh, nothing!—nothing at all. Only don't apologize—it's for me—and—I shouldn't—I shouldn't enjoy it. Promise me not to apologize till to-morrow morning at five-and-twenty minutes to nine—and not then for me. I would rather walk to St. Jean. Oh, I say, I'm sticking to the floor. Oh, Mr. Fairfax, look at your trousers! I forgot!" Tom had affectionately laid his soapy hands on Fairfax's knees.

"It doesn't matter, Tom. There! you'll make them worse."

Tom had promptly disentangled the wet towel from among his clothes, and having conveyed all the soap which his hands did not lose in the hunt to the wet, thin bit of diaper, had vigorously rubbed Mr. Fairfax's knees with the liniment.

"Oh, I say, they're a lot worse. I *am* sorry. I'll put my stockings on. And what will you do for a towel? You can't use this."

Fairfax at last was compelled to realize the situation, and took temporary measures of protection by getting further on the bed—out of Tom's way.

"Oh, Lord, what a mess we're in! We are about fit to tramp to St. Jean. But why am I to wait till five-and-twenty minutes to nine?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all, Mr. Fairfax. Only the post comes then."

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"And what has the post ever done for us? Eh?"

"But it might. It's the last chance, you know, to-morrow morning. And, you know, *we* believe in chance. It has done a lot for us. You'll wait; won't you?"

"Yes, I'll wait. Wash that off, Tom. Wash it all off."

"I can't, Mr. Fairfax. There isn't enough water. You know I spilt it."

"Then ring the bell."

"There isn't a bell, Mr. Fairfax; the rope's gone." And Tom looked desperately round at the bare room, with its bit of soaked carpet, on which stood the tiny wash-hand bowl, coated only with thick foaming lather. Splashes of lather—as scattered from a barber's brush—clung to the chair by Tom's side, and flecked the candle-stick on the floor. But most of the lather which Tom had made was encasing his legs, coat upon coat, now in a rapid and irritating state of congelation. "Oh, I say, Mr. Fairfax, I *am* sorry for you; but it's doing me good. I can feel it." By way of illustration he executed a treadmill kind of dance, and periodically conveyed a good deal of the healing condiment from his shins to his finger-nails. "Oh, I know! I'll cover them all over with paper; then it *will* be sticking-plaster."

Fairfax roused himself up again, this time more thoroughly, to contend with the horror of soap, which was spreading itself out like a plague. He rooted out half-a-dozen copies of the *Tribune de Genève*, and commanded Tom—pending the arrival of water—to mitigate the nuisance, and make himself as little sticky as he could with their assistance.

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So Tom, standing where he was placed—as much isolated as possible from every object—groomed himself patiently and laboriously, then polished the furniture and scrubbed the floor, plastered his shins and put things straight, looking around from time to time with satisfaction at the change he had effected, and with awed curiosity at his adored superior, who sat again in grim and abstracted silence, "thinking things over," on the edge of his bed.

After five or ten minutes had passed he was again roused up. Tom had put every thing in its place (which he could find), and again stood before him—now in his night-gown.

"Now, Mr. Fairfax, I'll say my prayers. I'm very sleepy. But don't apologize until five-and-twenty minutes to nine!"

"Why not till then? Oh, I remember—the post. Very well; kiss me, Tom!"

Tom climbed on to his knee, transferring a great strip of the patent plaster to his night-gown.

"No, not that only, but because"—he made a pause, put his arms round the man's neck and kissed him again—"because chance is the work of the angels, and it's for always! You know. You and me. We shall always, always have each other, that I *know*, and I *think* we shall have two sovereigns to-morrow morning."

This reiterated allusion to two sovereigns at length awoke Fairfax's interest. It embodied a desideratum too specific in the work of the angels even from Tom's standpoint; so he dislodged Tom's head from the pillow it had

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found and seemed tranquilly going to sleep on, his own vexed and heavy breast, and gave him an interrogatory shaking, with some affectation of mirth.

"I say! What do you mean? Have you got two sovereigns? Is it all humbug about the post?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Fairfax, I haven't. I haven't got ten centimes. I lent that half-franc to Paoli for his fines; but I hope——"

Tom was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Oh, I say! Don't let them come in, Mr. Fairfax, and don't—don't apologize for any thing."

It was one of the pupils who stood at the door, so he most probably did not understand Tom's remarks, which were not whispered.

However, he did not wish to come in. He simply handed in two envelopes, very politely.

"A note for you, sir, and a letter for Monsieur Tom, which was forgotten this afternoon, with Monsieur Vautier's compliments."

"What's that, Mr. Fairfax? The post? For me? Mrs. Nodder?"

"Yes, here you are; it came this afternoon."

Tom grabbed the letter, and having gone to the darkest corner he could find, tore it open, evidently seeking something more substantial than news; while Mr. Fairfax, bending over the candle-light on the mantel-piece, slowly and curiously examined the outside of his note, which had come by hand, the address, in a lady's writing, being still faintly blue—evidently hardly dry.

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"Something more," he muttered, "about this blessed apology—Madame Vautier's advice, I suppose."

But he had to stop.

Tom had bounded to him with a smothered, but intelligible, whoop of triumph, flourishing detached parts of his communication in either hand, while the envelope, which he had so far retained in his mouth, fluttered to the floor.

"Now, Mr. Fairfax, we can ride to St. Jean, and we can both get some new clothes, or mine mended. Look!"

It was a veritable Bank of England five-pound note! Fairfax both looked at and felt it. Then he looked at and felt Tom, as if to make sure he was not in a dream.

"Oh, I knew she would, Mr. Fairfax; and I shall pay her back. Oh, my goodness, five whole sovereigns! I wish—I wish we could make *them* apologizé, Mr. Fairfax. Could we?"

Fairfax did not answer. He was engrossed in the beautiful possibilities—which Tom had already touched on—wrapped up in that five-pound note, and in admiration of Tom's financial sagacity, and in wonder at some characteristics of Mrs. Nodder which he could not give a name to.

However, the reality of the phenomenon being established, he answered some of the questions which Tom discharged like a mitrailleuse discharging bullets, and even managed to edge in a few aphorisms of his own, to the glory of human nature in general, and particularly to the credit of Mrs. Nodder.

Then he took the letter to the candle on the mantelpiece, over which Tom had already singed his hair and made his eyes smart to little purpose—for Mrs. Nodder

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wrote a pointed, straggling, provoking hand—and proceeded to read it aloud for their joint benefit in appropriately low tones, Tom curling himself up in tailor fashion at his feet, after assuring himself audibly that the floor was not damp *there.*

"7 St. Philip's Terrace,
"Barnfield, August 7, 188–.

"My Dear Tom:

"It is my melancholy pleasure to send you five pounds. Be sure and take the number of it, and don't tell any body. I have worked very hard for it, but I have some more, being a saving woman, without having no mind for luxuries, and nothing more than rheumatics, and sometimes pains in the stomach, which don't cost any thing to speak of.

"You must have seen a great deal of the world, and I hope you will get up in it again; but I have my doubts. And I don't know as I've heard that foreigners are so much fonder of trumpery than common folk. But I wouldn't say a word against Mr. Fairfax. You must have been a sight of expense to him, and he was always the real gentleman, except that he took you off like a burglar and giv me a slap in the face.

"But, my dear Tom, by-gones is by-gones, and I am a very lonely woman, and Mr. Diggle has set foot in our kitchen for the last time. We had words, and I giv him his hat, and he will never speak an unrespectful word again you or Mr. Fairfax again, whether you come back like wise prodigal sons or not.

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"And Mr. Patterwell has given over taking suppers, and goes to bed at ten o'clock on a pint of hot water every night for his constitution. He looks just as white, but eats more at breakfast, and says he will live longer. And I tell him he will, and pretends to take it myself. It's a great release!

"And this is what I am writing for. To tell you and Mr. Fairfax that when you have seen enough of far countries, and haven't bread enough and to spare, you can come back again, and Mr. Fairfax can have the attic all to hisself, and need only pay for his victuals till he can afford it, and I shall always say 'Sir' to him, and treat him just as if he was a real gentleman and a genius, and had never disgraced hisself at all. And I shall pay the tax for Wag, and not throw it in your teeth, nor nothing else.

"Now I have said all as I have to say, and my eyes smart. The weather is very hot in the kitchen. But the parks is beautiful. I went last night to look at the pictures after reading your letter. They are no better than Mr. Fairfax's, but most of them is much bigger, and I don't want to throw cold water on him, and you can tell him so, only I should like you to learn a trade when your schooling is done, because seeing the world isn't getting up in it. And I'm as anxious for you to be a gentleman as he is, and you'll have my little savings, as I've all along intended.

"There was some folks here about a fortnight ago, asking for your dear mother and that picture, which I'm glad you've took away. I think she owed them something; leastwise they pretended they owed *her* something,

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which made me suspect them. They wanted to see her signature and some writing. So at last I showed them some old bills, and a letter to me about you, and the register of your birth, for fear as they should think I wanted to cover any thing up.

"They said they might turn out to be worth a lot of money, which of course isn't true; and I give them my mind, because they just wanted to get them out of me.

"Then they went away, but they come again and brought the most respectable lawyer in Barnfield, and I lent them to him, and some old letters, because he said he would find out all about your parentage, and he said as if your mother did owe any thing—God bless her for a kind, good lady!—they could never make you pay any thing, nor me neither. And he gave me a wink. Mr. Weaver will be too sharp for them. And he told me by myself as he wouldn't part with the dociments.

"So you see, Tom, I know something without having seen so much of the world. And I do think, Tom, as your mother was a lady born, though a very poor one, and you are no common Brown, but has a A in your name, which I never found out before in your register, and perhaps they'll find out as how it was you came to sign yourself Tom Bart Brown. Now I can't see to write no more. Give my respects to Mr. Fairfax, and remember that Mr. Diggle is as good as dead; and I'm a lone woman and has quite forgiven you—and he had better come to my attic till things mend. I am afraid them foreign phases will get worse. Only don't come and say as I've prevented either of you from getting famous. I do like Mr. Pesta-

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lozzi, from what you say of him, but the rich people of Barnfield have never done *me* no harm, and they have built a lot of churches and alms-houses. But I pray God will keep me out of them and give me a Christian burial, and I don't know as I want any thing else if you won't come.

"With my love,

"I remain, my dear Tom,

"Yours respectfully,

"ELIZABETH NODDER."

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CHAPTER XVI

"FAMOUS"

At last Tom had consented to be fixed up in bed with one of Mr. Fairfax's coats on, tied by the arms under his chin—going to sleep being considered out of the question for some time.

He was keen for discussing the next "phase," and had already composed the outlines—with some telling sentences complete—of a letter to Mrs. Nodder, stoutly declining her offer, both for himself and Mr. Fairfax, but thanking her for it in very affectionate terms—terms in which he lavishly compared her to the last straw, to a lighthouse on the rocks, and to the mother of the Gracchi (of whom he intended to learn something more before writing any thing down).

If Tom had not at last surrendered to this mental distraction, Mr. Fairfax would doubtless have deferred reading his own letter indefinitely, for he had twice taken it out of his pocket and put it back again.

Curiously, he had not for one moment questioned the authorship of this note nor its import. Hence his indifference and delay. But he had no sooner opened it than he saw from the heading that his surmises were altogether misplaced, and new curiosity pricked his mind.

Fortunately Tom did not observe this. He was momen-

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tarily involved in an abstruse metaphor for to-morrow's use, so Fairfax read at his ease, and by turn knitted and lifted his brows, unquestioned.

The letter was from Madame Bonjour of Le Bosquet, to whom he certainly owed nothing—except gratitude for seeing that Tom always made an excellent dinner, and for plying him frequently with fruit and bon-bons to carry away.

Briefly, it was an astonishing proposal that Mr. Fairfax should paint a portrait of Madame Bonjour, as good as that of Mrs. Barowne, for which she proposed to pay him—to use her own words—"twenty-five pounds of your money, English."

It was specifically stipulated that Madame Bonjour should be made a "picture," and not a "figure," and that the painter should devote a full month to the work, coming to Le Bosquet at least once a day. But Madame Bonjour naïvely suggested that, as he had already painted her portrait once (a twenty-francs portrait), and the wants of the visitors were many and frequent, they should dispense with any protracted sittings.

The letter then went on to say that Madame Bonjour would not presume to dictate to Monsieur Fairfax concerning his choice of residence, but that Le Bosquet was very near, and that a master at La Grotte had once stayed with her a fortnight. She added irrelevantly—from national antipathy—that it was the German master, and that he went away without paying for his washing, which was very slight.

She enlarged on this suggestion by remarking that Le

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Bosquet would be *en fête* to welcome back Monsieur Tom; that Monsieur Bonjour had now mastered the mysteries of an English plum-pudding, and was going to produce one at the very first Sunday dinner honored by Tom's presence; and that he had also in store some other *pâtisserie*, in which—a qualification Tom had repeatedly pointed out as desirable—"a fork would stand upright."

In conclusion madame said she would permit herself to go the length of guaranteeing Monsieur le Peintre highly remunerative work for the next three months, since monsieur her husband was only waiting his turn to be painted, and the visitors were already keenly discussing the desirability of securing some memento of Neuville, at least, from his cunning hand.

She regretted that Neuville had been so slow to appreciate the merit of the great English artist who had come among them; but his "fame" had at last reached them from St. Jean, where monsieur the English artist, and his little friend, and the wonderful Wag, were household words.

No wonder that Fairfax's perplexity and amusement became too obtrusive to pass unchallenged before he reached the end of the letter.

"What does she say, Mr. Fairfax? What are you laughing at? Won't it be fun?"

"It will be fun, Tom. It *is* fun; but I don't understand it. There is some hand here behind Madame Bonjour's."

"You mean behind Madame Vautier's. Does she say we needn't apologize? I like Madame Vautier. But we'll

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go, won't we? We'll go now if they want to apologize to *us*, won't we?"

Fairfax threw the letter into the air and laughed.

"Oh, I say, don't, Mr. Fairfax! What does she say? My shins do hurt. Foreign boys are brutes, Mr. Fairfax. What does she say?"

"She wants us to stop on in Neuville, Tom—what do you think?—and the apology can go to the dickens!"

"Oh, but it can't! We sha'n't stop, shall we? You've promised, you know. I like Madame Vautier—she is Swiss—and I think—I think I should like a public school. But this—this is too public, Mr. Fairfax. Look at this room, and we've nowhere else, and I'm not doing any thing except fighting, and I should—I should very much like a week's holiday. My legs do hurt, and you could teach me to box. What are you laughing for? You—you've not been so insulted as I have."

"Very well, Tom, we'll clear out—you always get your own way—to-morrow morning."

"Oh, no, no!" He shook his head with mournful resignation. "Not if you like it—not if it's all for the best; but we *will* make them apologize, won't we? It's a hard world, Mr. Fairfax, that we're seeing now; and we've been a long way down in it, haven't we? and we've let it all out to Mrs. Nodder for nothing—at least she's found it out!"

"But now, Tom, you will be able to send her those five pounds back in a week or two, and show her we've got up again."

"Shall I?" Tom's eyes sparkled, and his imagination

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set off at a canter on a new road. "I never thought of that. My legs—my—my wounds are not at all dangerous, you know—only they smart; and if Paoli doesn't give me my half-franc back to-morrow—as he promised, you know—I shall challenge him on the spot. Now I think I will go to sleep. Here is your coat, Mr. Fairfax. Don't forget we haven't any water, nor soap, nor towels, and the bell is broken; and remember the floor is all wet when you say your prayers—and your best trousers! Oh, I am sorry for that. Come and say good-night, Mr. Fairfax. This isn't a nice phase; but you know best. I suppose if Paoli goes on kicking, I can kick him back?"

Fairfax took the coat, which Tom was holding out, and pitched it carelessly on to his own bed.

"Go to sleep, my boy," he said, putting his arm round him with a tenderness which was nothing new to Tom, but was never stale, and never unanswered. "Go to sleep, and kick Paoli in your dreams, and make them all apologize on their knees. It will be your last chance. To-morrow morning we go back, bag and baggage, to Le Bosquet, for a month at least."

"What!—really—with five sovereigns? Oh, I say, I can't sleep on that! And your trousers? And what shall we do there?"

"Paint—paint all day, and half the night; and scrape the palettes and wash the brushes—they'll want it again—and go on with our lessons, and get famous."

"Oh, I say, Mr. Fairfax, let me get up! What do you mean?"

"Well, Tom, if you must know, I've got a com-

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mission. I've an engagement for a month—and more to follow."

"Who from? How did it come?"

Here Fairfax held up the letter.

"It's a case of proxy. You remember what that means."

"Oh, yes; paying down on the nail, doesn't it? Who for? Oh, I say!"

"Well, that doesn't matter: but I think it's for Madame Bonjour's rich old uncle. You remember him?"

"I should think I do. He said he had a house full of paintings, and he was nice. I was sorry he had to leave in such a hurry. He said if me and my mother had been framed he would have made an offer for it. Oh, I say, Mr. Fairfax! I must get up and dress; may I? I would like to put my things together and help you."

Tom emphasized this request by disentombing his papered legs and grabbing his knickerbockers from an adjacent chair. But the quantity of candle-grease (which he now discovered) adhering to them on the outside, and their pronounced soppiness—from the overturned bowl, which had affected the inside—aroused even Tom's compunctions before he had wholly enveloped both legs. He stood for a moment perplexed and irresolute, then a sudden inspiration seized him, and he kicked them off with a light heart.

"My old ones are better than these, Mr. Fairfax, until they're dried, and I know exactly where they are."

So saying, he leaped nimbly across the room, and buried his head in a drawer—already called *his* drawer (and plainly distinguished as such by the contents, unless Wag

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might have claimed a share). From thence he dragged out the discarded garment of happier days, and dangled it triumphantly in the air. In another moment he made another discovery—a pleasing one.

"Oh! there's a lot of nougat in this pocket, and, Mr. Fairfax, there's a letter in the other. It must be one I've forgot to post for somebody; it's—oh, I say——"

Fairfax, who had watched the production of that very clean and otherwise curious thing from such a receptacle as Tom's pocket, took the somewhat bulky-looking envelope into his own hand, and his curiosity was not diminished when he saw it was addressed to himself.

He opened it in a great hurry, and the bulkiness explained itself in the falling out of twenty-five notes of a hundred francs each.

Tom began to gather them up, with an awe-struck face, and Fairfax read:

"Le Bosquet, July 17, 188–.

"To George Fairfax, Esq.

"Dear Sir: Enclosed please find one hundred pounds for Mrs. Barowne's portrait, and a little present, if there is any change, for Tom.

"Yours very truly,

"Henry R. Barowne."

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CHAPTER XVII

FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

"GREYFORT, GRAINSHIRE, August 7, 188–.

"MY DEAR FLORA:

"At last the insufferable suspense is over. Poor Henry! He told me all yesterday. And it is nothing like so bad as I feared. I don't know whether it is bad at all. I can't realize it. I am yet in a dream. My dear, I am a step-mother.

"Now, if you have thrown your hands up in the air, you may again pick up the letter from the floor. The news was broken to me in such a way that I had not to jump at all. Will you believe it—you, who read three novels a week, and have heard of every thing that never happens—your step-nephew—you are an aunt at last, you see—is the darlingest boy in the world? It is Tom.

"You won't believe it? No more would I yesterday. And if I were to write twenty crossed pages it would still seem incredible. Good gracious! Even now I tremble. The presumptive Lady Barowne was alive three years ago. She might have been living now for any thing Henry knew a month ago. She only died a month before I was married. Put this letter in the fire as soon as you have read it. Henry may well have thought that I wouldn't bear it; and I wouldn't have done if the boy had not been Tom.

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And yet, Florry, Henry was not really to blame—any more than he is to blame for every thing. Only, what will they all say?

"Well, the fact remains; let them say what they like; and *I am glad.* But, then, you don't know Tom. But I suppose you will be stamping your foot because I don't explain the mystery. My dear Florry, I simply can't—I couldn't if you were here.

"That impulsive and self-reliant young woman was *not* drowned, and (thank God!) Tom was not. I don't know now whether it was all a blunder to begin with, or her scheming. It would fill a newspaper—the explanations—so I am told; but I haven't listened to them yet, and don't want to.

"I know their names were among the list of the lost—hers and Tom's—and I know she made use of the mistake, if she didn't plan the whole thing, to cry quits for good. Henry has had to confess, among a hundred other confessions in which he writhed like a worm, that she was afraid he would take the boy from her as soon as ever the law allowed him. Oh, my dear, happy, husband-adoring sister, you have no idea of the life they led; and you have no idea of the life *I* have led. Pride has kept me up, and—well! perhaps some old memories. But that young woman was different. She turned much more than the proverbial worm before they were separated; and I fancy her husband had some excuse for not wringing his hands much when she was drowned. But I can *not* bear this subject. You now know about as much as I know at present. She is dead now—quite dead! I have the certificate, as well as

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Tom's evidence; and I have the certificate of Tom's birth. She knew what she was doing. She soon got another copy of that (Tom's fifty-pound portrait was in safe-keeping—in pawn, I believe), and doubtless intended to establish Tom's claims in due time, though his chances of the title then were very remote. However, she hadn't forgotten the chances. There was a scrap of paper inside one of her letters with Sir Thomas's signature on—just 'Thomas Barowne, Bart.,' and underneath it, in her own writing, 'Tom's grandfather.'

"Oh, the proofs of her survival are very clear—she took care they should be—and I am afraid the reasons she had to advance for wishing to appear dead would not strike every-body as ridiculous. Poor Henry!

"The woman had brains as well as a will, if she was only an actress. Have you ever noticed that if you just drop the 'a' out of Barowne it makes Browne? The poor thing died suddenly when she really died, or all this would have come out during my honeymoon. My head is beginning to swim again; not another word will I say till we meet—except about Tom.

"Florry, truth *is* stranger even than three-volume fiction; and all this day—it is four o'clock now—I have been quite a sane and ordinary woman again, and never asked myself once if marriage is a failure. But, then, as I said, you don't know Tom.

"Of course I don't tell Henry how I am satisfied with the whole affair. I am very, very grave. But I am afraid my lofty serenity will soon break down. You see, he wants to talk about Tom every minute, while he pretends that it

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is *me*—only me—and my happiness that he now thinks of. Poor fellow! I think I shall tell him to-night that I am happy. My heart bleeds for him. He has been wandering about the house and shivering ever since we came, like a ghost with a bad cold. He spends half his time sitting in shawls over the library fire, looking at Tom's photo—a little photo—of Tom and Wag—which he gave me.

"Now for other news, if you care for any. Romance again! Those Rumbajen Mines (or whatever the name is) are *not* waste paper. They have turned into bank-notes of enormous value—I'm sure I don't know how much each, and don't want to know just now. I even forgot to tell you about them a week ago. I know they *were* to be worth about one hundred pounds each; but that was when people wanted to give them away. Henry is very exultant—seeing they were some of his last wild oats, and the first which he sowed at my expense.

"So all these wonders having come to pass, we shall not dream of letting Greyfort, though I'm sure Henry cannot live here more than three months in the year.

"Henry is maliciously anxious to see Mrs. Kerson when she learns that her eldest-born will not add old Greyfort to his numberless acres. And what do you think? The Grove-Thompsons have actually been heard to talk about the sale—as if we should have sold a single chair. I *am* rather pleased there will be a thorn in the flesh for *them* every time we go to church. But Sir Thomas was too bad. They can't help being so odiously rich, and the girls are really nice.

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"I have grown very worldly, you will say. My dear, I am a mother—only a step-mother in name. I feel no longer *as lonely as paint can make me.*

"What we shall do with Tom for the next year or two I don't yet know; but, of course, he will go to Eton when he is fourteen. At any rate, the spell on old silent Greyfort will be broken, for he will be here in any case for weeks and weeks together. And where Tom is there is no spell of silence or spirit of gloom. You must see him as soon as ever he comes to England.

"There is only one jarring note in all this—of course I am looking beyond that horrible nine days' wonder. Poor Mr. Fairfax! It will be like stealing the one ewe lamb. He simply lives for that boy; and, you remember, he stole Tom himself, in a way.

"Of course we shall let Tom visit him wherever he is, and he will always be welcome at Greyfort; but—you know—I think I would rather never see him again.

"Henry calls him 'the genius' now, without any satire. He intends to do a great deal for him, but I don't know how. To begin with, he is the proudest mortal I ever met—after Sir Thomas. It is an easy-fitting, unbreakable kind of pride, which he wears like an old coat. By-the-bye, his coat was beginning to look pretty old, which reminds one of what Socrates said about being god-like—— Don't be jumping up to snub me; I don't know any thing about Socrates, except what Tom told me.

"He said—Socrates, I mean: 'The gods want nothing, and they come nearest to the gods who want the least.' So, my dear Flora, you are not very god-like. There is a

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snub for you! Tom told me something like this every day, invariably giving me his authority—Mr. Fairfax! Indeed, I owe a great part of my education to Mr. Fairfax—under Tom.

"But enough of such frivolity. I am very sad again, and I can't get Mr. Fairfax out of my head. I say *my head*, Florry. Don't dare to pervert my meaning. And, you know, the Barownes of all future generations will owe Mr. Fairfax an unpayable debt for what he has done for Tom this last three years. They *can* repay Mrs. Nodder.

"Well, I must really stop. I have been writing for nearly two hours. And what a letter! You will think I am either light-headed or light-hearted. Well, my dear, I am both by turns, and terribly uncomfortable between times.

"Poor old Sir Thomas is just the same, but more beautiful, more child-like every day. He told me this morning I had pretty hair, and called Henry a good boy. He won't even take Aunt Bella's own beef-tea now, but often talks about coming down. He thinks it is winter (not that he is very simple for that), and sends orders to the stables, as if they were still full of hunters. But he is particularly happy (and rational) when Henry talks to him about the stock and the timber and the old tenants.

"The clergyman, old Mr. Romsey, comes every day. He is a beautiful old man—little, and very erect—the only person Sir Thomas was ever afraid of, though they were very good friends. They spend most of the time in talking about dead parishioners and the Grainshire Hunt. Of course Sir Thomas knows him perfectly while he is with him; but it was pathetic this morning to hear him

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ask, directly the door was closed, 'if that old gentleman always came here to say his prayers.' He is simply going to sleep fast, and has already begun to dream. I suppose in another week at the most the master of Greyfort—the real master—will be a boy not twelve years old. What a change he will make to the very stones! But I hope he need not come until after the funeral. I could not imagine Tom in Greyfort to-day. It has been rain, rain, rain, ever since breakfast, and the wind has moaned about the old place every minute. How different from Neuville! We seem to be the only people in the world, and every sound that one hears seems melancholy. The rooks have cawed all day dismal solitary caws, and the trees have creaked, and the ivy has beaten the windows, and the cattle have lowed to each other as if they were all sad for something. Only the swifts have screamed with any thing like life as they chased each other past the window; and the view from this window seems to reach to the rim of the world—of the world in a trance. Oh, my dear Florry, I wouldn't have lived here if we had been as rich as the Grove-Thompsons—alone.

"Adieu! Write me three sheets in return. Henry has been in twice. He sends his love. Don't despise it, because I don't. Give mine to Herbert and all the children.

"Your ever-loving sister,

"KATE.

"*P. S.*—5.45 P.M.—I had only just fastened this up when they came to tell me, and to draw the blinds down. Poor Sir Thomas! They thought he was asleep."

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CHAPTER XVIII

"THE WORK OF THE ANGELS"

Le Bosquet was not crowded in August. Still, its baths and its water, and its equally famous system of massage, attracted various visitors; and Mr. Fairfax and Tom found the quiet, sun-steeped old place jogging on in the old way—though with new faces—to the old hum of contented life, any thing but dull. They also found the clock-like regularity of good meals an appreciable blessing.

Fairfax had written to Mr. Barowne, on discovering the gold-mine in Tom's pocket, to explain things and apologize. He informed him that he had put by eighty pounds out of the hundred, and should not meddle with it unless it were under great pressure on Tom's behalf, but hand it over to Tom when he was old enough to handle such a sum, hoping that Mr. Barowne would not think he had taken too conceited a view of his talents in reserving twenty pounds for himself. He told Mr. Barowne that Tom was writing to express his gratitude (which he did in his own clear way, enclosing a letter for Mrs. Barowne also), and for himself he should always remember (and cause Tom to remember) this favor to his little orphan friend, of whom he was now the guardian, as one of the kindest acts he had met with.

Having written that letter, to which he had yet at the end of a week received no answer, Fairfax set about to

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secure canvas, and paint Madame Bonjour in Mrs. Barowne's old nook among the roses, determined to make as much a "picture" of her as her comfortable, creaseless outlines and fat, good-tempered face in such a place, among such associations, would allow him. He worked with a light heart, and enjoyed it, quite certain, now, from the manner in which madame had received and parried his remarks touching her rich old uncle, that that gentleman was the beneficent art-critic who had discovered his genius under Tom's guidance. Tom had taken him up to the studio, and kept him there half-an-hour. He was making use of this discovery, Fairfax concluded, to flatter his niece—whom he loved as a daughter—and insure the return of the money he spent into the till of Le Bosquet, which he loved also, having paid for the furniture.

Tom had found great diversion in pondering and discussing with Mr. Fairfax the advent of an "a" into his name; but in his first fervor of gratitude and admiration, when his energy was employed in coining powerful expressions for it, he had not alluded to the subject in writing to Mrs. Nodder.

He had now written again, however, and was anxiously awaiting authoritative information to settle the discussion. Mr. Fairfax held that Mrs. Nodder had perhaps meant to say there was an "e" in his name, not an "a." But Tom stuck to the "a," and wished to sign himself Browna, though he admitted it would make him a very "uncommon Brown" indeed.

Life had begun again to assume for Tom a sunny expanse of illimitable happiness. His "wounds" and his

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"insults" were alike forgotten. He was having a fortnight's holiday from all books, except the wide-open, illuminated book of learned nature. The weather was none too hot for him, and even washing the brushes and scraping the palettes did not keep him much indoors. His hands were always busy, though not invariably on that account exempt from mischief. He became greatly interested in the vines, now under continuous treatment for the phylloxera, and sampled the bunches hanging about the windows of Le Bosquet several times a day. He was also studying the cultivation of tomatoes, and tried hard to make himself like them raw, while his diligence in killing the insects in the bark of the fruit trees, with the aid of his pocket-knife and paraffine oil, might have entitled him to the wages of a day-laborer.

Tom's genius was for mastering things, and his foible was letting people know he had done it. His range of triumphs was extensive, and his satisfaction was equal in learning the spots of the blue butterflies, in tracking the sheeny, glimmering, bright-eyed lizard to its hiding-place, and discovering the secret, in Monsieur Bonjour's kitchen, of getting frozen cream into cooked *pâtisserie*—in the making of iced *meringues*.

Moreover, he was now "famous in Neuville also," and took great pleasure in walking round the town with Wag, now reinstated in his old home. On these rounds Tom looked very keenly after Wag, and promptly fetched him out of every house that he went into, giving him a lecture publicly in French for his indiscretion, thereby showing that the dog's value remained unimpaired in spite of

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the depreciation of the whole of Neuville, and that any kindness offered in mere charity would not be tolerated.

However, in this respect Wag showed more forgiveness than his master, still suavely soliciting any morsel of any body's dinner whenever he could, and this weakness was found incurable without stuffing Wag previous to each expedition to the point of distress. Ultimately it became the means of patching up the feud, and at the end of a week Tom hobnobbed again with his old acquaintances, palliating their deviation from the strict line of truth out of consideration to the climate and early influences. But a Swiss, just because he was a Swiss, was never quite the same upright, brave, William-Tell-like man again.

However, the Swiss in Neuville got over that, and became more willing than ever to show Tom how to carve wood with a penknife, how musical-boxes were made, and how the exact cry of the cuckoo was produced in a guinea clock which they offered Tom for a sovereign. And all of these arts Tom proposed to master some day, and took the carving in hand there and then.

At this time Tom seriously thought of adopting Switzerland as the land of the free and of fine weather, of genial occupation, and the very *terra beatifica* of a painter. Of course he would go back to Barnfield to "let them know," and possibly bring back Mrs. Nodder.

And Fairfax, too, looked with a kindly eye once more on the sunny, tinkling, quiet land where there were no rich people and Royal Academy; the memory-haunted land, hallowed by one more blessed face which had passed him by and left him a better man.

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There are some men who cannot help being poetic. It is a pity there are not more. There are some women who cannot once look and speak to such men without leaving behind them an eternal glamour. It is a pity they are so few, and are frequently married ones.

But the past is a blessed treasure, and we get more of it every day. The real and the unreal are the same when we are asleep, and we make the gravest mistakes about them when awake. The shadow cast from things beautiful is itself beautiful, and Hope is only Memory looking forward. It is but the spirit—in every thing—that lives, that survives, and the instinct of immortality is to reinstate it. What meaning has any good-by unless it is that side of the bridge which leads to "How do you do?" And there are those to whom the greatest, mournfullest, hope-denied farewell is but a pass and watchword never to be forgotten—an *open sesame* for the granite door of their hearts' desire to which they shall come at last.

George Fairfax had entertained these thoughts, and had written some of them down in his pocket-book, and even gone so far as trying the effect of them on Tom.

Tom said they reminded him of some sayings he had seen in a birthday-book, but he couldn't tell what made Mr. Fairfax think of them, nor what he was going to do with them. But he showed plainly that he had himself pursued similar thoughts in a straighter line. For once, when Fairfax was staring in blank abstraction, brush in hand, at Madame Bonjour's expanding charms on the wet canvas, Tom crept up to him and shook his head, and mut-

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tered something about "a figure," adding in a clear voice, with a sympathetic look into the painter's face:

"You will never, never forget Mrs. Barowne, will you? and you will meet again—we shall all meet each other again—some time."

This was a way of stating the case which most people older than Tom will think preferable to Fairfax's poetical speculations—most people older than Tom being unpoetic, earth-hobbled, thistle-browsing creatures at their best—not to lightly call any people asses who may claim to descend from apes.

But this holiday-making life at Le Bosquet, which afforded so much time and occasion for retrospection both to Tom and Fairfax, was not to flow on without new events.

An English gentleman arrived early one forenoon, of very business-like appearance, and with no other impedimenta than a hand-bag. He enquired promptly for Mr. Fairfax, and as soon as he found him he requested a private interview, for which (unknown to Tom) Madame Bonjour ushered them into the Barownes' old sitting-room, which the tenants had vacated the day before. There they were shut up for about two hours, during which time Tom had naturally wanted Mr. Fairfax on six separate occasions. He wondered where he could have gone to; most of all, he wanted to tell Fairfax what the *garçon* had told him—"that a gentlemen had arrived, in a top hat, who could only speak English, and he wasn't a tourist."

Finally, Tom ran into this gentleman's arms as he was coming out of the doorway, with his hands behind him,

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evidently with his mind at leisure, and a little amused with his leisurely thoughts.

"Pardon, monsieur!" Tom doffed his straw hat and came to a standstill.

The gentleman nodded.

"How d'you do, Tom? Your name is Tom, isn't it?"

"Yes. It's Tom Brown. How did you know, sir?"

"I've been talking to Mr. Fairfax."

"Oh! do you know Mr. Fairfax?"

"I do now," he answered, smiling, while he looked at Tom up and down with evident interest.

"Where *is* Mr. Fairfax?"

"He's in the house. He's in that room," and the new arrival stepped out of the doorway and nodded toward one of the windows in the second story.

"Oh! the Barownes' sitting-room. Are you going to stop, sir?"

"No, Tom, I must go back to-night."

"Oh! we are stopping—stopping infinitely. We like it."

"Stopping *indefinitely*, eh?" The gentleman laughed and looked Tom over again. "That means you might go any moment."

"Yes, I meant indefinitely, but I didn't mean that. I meant a very long time. We sha'n't go any moment. I'll show you round, sir, if you like, this afternoon, and take you to the château, shall I?"

"Thank you, my boy. I think you and I will be very good friends, Tom."

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Tom laughed. Though not reserved, he was tickled at the idea of forming a friendship in an afternoon. But he only said "Yes," doffed his hat again with a polite "*Au revoir*, monsieur," and rattled up the stairs.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Fairfax? You've seen him? What—why—what's the matter, Mr. Fairfax?"

When Tom bounded into the room Fairfax was sitting with his back to the door, resting his elbows on the table, with his head between his hands—a picture of limp, resentless misery.

He jumped up immediately, but not before Tom had perceived that he was "thinking," and thinking in a particular way—a way which Tom's unsignalled and startling appearance had similarly interrupted several times in the Rue du Lac and at La Grotte, and which Tom inseparably associated with art crises, new arrangements for dinners, apologies, and other objectionable "phases."

"The matter? Every thing's the matter, Tom. I was thinking we must have your plum-pudding to-day. I've news for you!" He clapped Tom on the back, and then set him out at arm's-length to look at him, as if he were in rollicking good-humor. "My boy, you've found your fortune—you're famous!"

"*Me?*" Tom looked very keenly into his big friend's face. "Oh, Mr. Fairfax, you weren't thinking *that*. It's one of your tactics."

"It's the sober truth, Tom. The angels have been at work with a vengeance."

"Really and truly? I thought you were very sad. Have you heard from the Royal Academy?"

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Fairfax had to give over grinning to smile. He smiled sadly.

"Have you, Mr. Fairfax? Is this gentleman a—what do you call them?—a macadiman?"

"Ten times better than that, Tom. I said *you* were famous. *You*, my own brave little boy. Kiss me, Tom."

Tom complied with the request hurriedly. He was excited, but not at all elated.

"Oh, that's nonsense, Mr. Fairfax. I *can't* be famous without you. I—I shouldn't like to be famous by myself, and—oh, I say, have they found out who my mother was? Is that it?"

"Now you burn, Tom."

"Oh, I say! Shall we get a lot of money? Can we keep horses?"

"Not quite so fast, Tom. First, I must tell you who you are. Mrs. Nodder said there was an 'a' in your name, didn't she?"

"Yes. Is it an 'a,' Mr. Fairfax?"

"Yes, it's an 'a.' You were right, Tom; but there's an 'e' too, at the end. You ought to have written it B-r-o-w-n-e before."

"Oh!" Tom's eyes, always large and full, now grew nearly round, and their lambent blue yet bluer and more radiant with expanding wonder.

"Well, when you put 'a' after the 'B' in B-r-o-w-n-e, what does it make?"

Tom had resort to his fingers while he inaudibly ticked off the letters framed by his lips.

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"Why, that makes Barowne, Mr. Fairfax—the same as Mr. and Mrs. Barowne."

"That's just it, my boy. You are related to them."

"What, to Mr. and Mrs. Barowne?" His eyes opened yet wider still. "Oh, I say, Mr. Fairfax, it *is* funny! But mightn't there be a mistake? Is this gentleman Mrs. Nodder's lawyer? Mr. What's-his-name—the most respectable lawyer in Barnfield?"

"No; but it's quite true, Tom. There isn't a shadow of doubt. He has brought all the proofs."

"Well, it *is* funny. What will they say—Mr. and Mrs. Barowne?"

"Oh, they know already, and they are very glad. Aren't you?"

"Yes, I am. I'm *very* glad. They—they are very nice people to be related to, aren't they? and, I say, Mr. Fairfax, we shall all meet again now, sha'n't we? I shall—we shall—you will invite them, won't you, if we've a lot of money? But have we?"

"You'll have a fair amount, Tom, some day; but, you know, you are only a little boy now—a little boy ten years old to every-body but me, and you will have to be a very good boy and please your relations."

Something in Fairfax's manner of speaking awakened Tom's unsuspicious mind to the responsible and possibly disagreeable side of his new fortunes. He thought profoundly for a moment, and shook his head.

"We sha'n't ask *them* what to do, Mr. Fairfax, or where to go. I'm not such a little boy as that. I'm nearly eleven; and you are just the same as my father,

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you know. What could any body's relations do, Mr. Fairfax, if—if they tried to?"

"Do? Nothing. But they love you. You know that already. They will want to see a good deal of you, and they will want you to live with them!"

Tom was again plunged into thought, evidently not altogether pleasant.

"Well, it would depend where they wanted to live—wouldn't it?—and how long they wanted to live in one place—because, of course, *we* shall go on seeing the world, sha'n't we? Though it *would* be nice if we could all go together. I got very fond of Mr. Barowne at last, and—oh, yes, it *would* be very jolly. I say, Mr. Fairfax!"

"Yes?"

"You and Mrs. Barowne could always be together then. She would never be lonely, and you—you *are* fond of each other, aren't you? I am glad *she* is my relation. What relation is she, Mr. Fairfax? Is she my aunt?"

Fairfax drew Tom on to his knee, and put his arm round him. He had thought it advisable to break the news to him as gradually as he could; but he found, every time Tom spoke, it was to wring his heart.

To begin with, the blow had made him as feeble and helpless as a sick child, and there was no fencing with it. Tom was to go back that night with the solicitor's clerk, who had come loaded with indisputable evidence and authority.

Fairfax was most cordially invited to go back with Tom to Greyfort; but he had no intention of doing so—not then. He thought it would not be either the wisest or the

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kindest course. He would let Tom begin his new life with his new father unhampered and uninfluenced by him. Then he would go and see him. But it was hard! The world was once more a dim, wide blank to George Fairfax. Tom was going—going out of his care and control forever; going to be moulded to other minds, to save others from the nausea and nothingness of a useless life; going up in the world "to be famous and a good man" *without* him. Yes, the boy's great overrunning love would only start up now for him in fitful gushes, and then dwindle and dry up into a child's remembrance of a man he once loved—and what is that?

Oh! it was hard, bitter, unbearable. Every thing in life had failed him except Tom. Tom had brought his life back to him when he had thrown it away. Tom *was* his son—the son of his heart, "begotten in his bonds," and now he had to send him away—would have to drive him away—and to pretend to be gay while he did so.

He put his arm round the boy, pressed him with lingering fondness and kissed him; then he set him between his knees again, with the old pantomimic performance.

"Tom, my boy, your good luck has nearly turned my head. You are *not* an orphan."

Tom seemed to be struck dumb; but not with delight.

"Yes, my boy, you have a father; a much better fellow than I am, and well off. He wasn't dead. But he is dying now to have you in his arms; and this gentleman has come to fetch you."

Tom's eyes had been expanding with wonder and horror. The rising tears might have burst into a flood and brought

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Tom to the floor, or he might have flung his arms round Mr. Fairfax with wild devotion, save that a sudden, importunate thought flashed through his practical mind.

"Do you mean Mr. Barowne?"

"Mr. Barowne, Tom!"

"Then I sha'n't go!" Now Tom clung to his big friend with all his might, and his tears fell fast. "I like him—and Mrs. Barowne—I like her a thousand times better—but I sha'n't g-g-go, and—and—oh, Mr. Fairfax—chance—it—it isn't" (he dug his fingers more fiercely into the man's coat, and began to sob violently) "the angels. It's—it's—the—wo-work of the—the devils; but I sha'n't go."

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CHAPTER XIX

"A MAN OF THE WORLD"

THAT would be a sad chapter made up only of tears and hypocrisy, hopes which could not be realized, and promises never to be fulfilled. Let it be passed over.

Tom had yielded to authority—Mr. Fairfax's—the old authority, which he had never once questioned till this afternoon. He had dried his tears at last, and gone off in a very stolid mood, but wholly tractable.

His last little burst of tears had been tears of penitence—not for his father, who, Tom stoutly maintained, had never done any thing for him, "except not hitting Wag and letting him cure his gout." They were penitential tears for saying he "didn't think Mr. Fairfax would give him up so easily," when he couldn't help it.

One of the last reflections with which he comforted himself was that Mr. Barowne had always called *his* father "the old governor," or "his poor old dad," and that he should do the same, "because Mr. Fairfax was really his father."

And all his "real" father's efforts to inspire filial affection and respect were utterly vain, Tom even protesting that he would find it very difficult to love *Mrs.* Barowne now if he and Mr. Fairfax were kept long apart.

He, moreover, bolstered himself up against adversity

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with the reflection, which he freely communicated, "that the Barownes were a fighting family—that they had been fighting with each other at Greyfort ever since the Civil Wars," and that "they would be at it again directly he got there," always supposing that there was any predisposition to divest Mr. Fairfax of his paternal rights.

As for the old house, and the deer, and the title (Tom's father was now a baronet, and Tom had asked anxiously about a baronet's occupation), he treated them with a derision which no republican ever approached in his heart, and never surpassed in his speeches.

So fortified, he took his departure stolidly—respectful, but somewhat superciliously respectful, toward the gentleman who had him in charge, who could not speak an intelligible word of French, and whom, Tom complained to Mr. Fairfax, he "would have to look after at every turn and corner," which duties he immediately assumed on the arrival of the *voiture*, and more ostentatiously paraded at the station, to show Mr. Fairfax "he was keeping his word, and not going to grieve him any more."

Wag, with many words of consolation, was left with Fairfax as a kind of hostage of the Barownes, Tom pledging his word that within a month they should all be together again, "or he was not a Barowne," a distinction in which he suddenly found himself taking pride, solely on account of that old family's fame for internecine fighting.

When he had seen the very last of Tom's handkerchief, which was hung out of the railway carriage window long

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after it could be seen from Neuville, and long after society would have required Tom from one or two audible warnings to take it in, Fairfax walked sadly back through Neuville. But he did not go straight back to Le Bosquet. He went up a still, steep mountain path to find solitude—a solitude like that which was now to be his lot—unbroken, and apathetically silent and oppressive. The winding soft green path through the pine wood was carpeted with flowers; the projecting crags were bathed in the carmine and purple dyes of sunset, like landmarks in an elysian footpath. The glimpses of the higher ground, framed like little pictures between the stems of pine-trees and their interlaced branches, stood out like miracles of nature's coloring—the perfection of perspective and paint. Yes; but to one who was driven to spend his existence on that mountain side it was all monotonous. There is no solitude which is not sought. The rest is only confinement—a shutting out and a closing in, with the everlasting yearning for something that is not.

Fairfax saw no beauteous sunset; he only saw himself alone, and found some little relief from himself in arranging his thoughts for the long letter he was going to write to Mr. Barowne.

Mr. Barowne had certainly sent a very nice letter to him; and with the hundred things Fairfax wished to tell him about Tom, he did not wish to let a word or a thought escape him of a slighting nature, lest it might some way be prejudicial to Tom. Yet in his heart he felt a strangely bitter resentment. He could not say why,

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except that he had been robbed of all that he loved and lived for; and resentment is too unruly for logic.

When he returned to Le Bosquet, at about eight o'clock, he had not yet decided whether he would immediately return Tom's eighty pounds, or let that question slide for a week or two. However, as soon as he entered the hall he found that this, with other more engrossing questions, had all been deferred for him, and that new and very pressing affairs awaited his attention. The apathetic film, settling, like green moss on a stagnant pool, over his new existence, was broken with a splash, and an entirely new set of commotional ripples, with Tom in the centre, began to make his brain swim.

Three telegrams awaited him. The first in order of arrival, which he also happened to open first, was from Mr. Bland, Tom's temporary guardian. It had been handed in at 6.05 P.M. at Domier, and ran thus:

"Lost Tom at the last station—St. Jean. Was with me a second before the train started. Have heard from St. Jean that he took the train back to Neuville. Wire to the Hôtel d'Espagne. Have wired to Sir Henry.

"BLAND."

The second message was from Sir Henry Barowne, handed in at Loughbridge, Grainshire, at 7.45 P.M.:

"Tom given that idiot the slip. Confounded blundering to send him against his will. Is now in St. Jean. Famous. Have wired Bland he is not to meddle with him

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again. Give him my love. Keep him safe and sound at Le Bosquet. Am coming. Wire to Longley Junction, Grainshire.

"HENRY BAROWNE."

The third telegram was in French from La Violette, St. Jean, and had been handed in a few minutes later than Mr. Bland's :

"Monsieur Tom arrived alone with five pounds. Well, but excited. Is writing letters. Says you will come to-morrow.

"GUSTAVE."

Fairfax forgot his loneliness as soon as he saw these three telegrams ; and when he had mastered their simple contents he did not immediately think of it anew. He hurried again to the railway station, only stopping to put half-a-dozen indispensable things into a hand-bag.

He had ample time to catch the last train for St. Jean, but the various consolatory messages he had first to despatch, and his strange eagerness to get to Tom—to have him once again under any conditions, anywhere, all to himself—rather blinded Fairfax to the mechanical measurements of time. These things also made him wholly obtuse again to the common useful hints of our common nature, which, just as he entered Le Bosquet, were beginning to lure him away from his mental aches and the void in his life, with the aches and void that come from neglected meals. He had tasted nothing worth

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mentioning since breakfast, having forgotten lunch (as Tom did also), and only pretended to join Tom in his sumptuous four o'clock dinner.

But Madame Bonjour, though very excited, and delighted beyond measure that Tom was coming back (and Monsieur Barowne too), did not forget that telegrams can only take the place of regular meals for a short time; and as Fairfax hurriedly quitted Le Bosquet, she ran after him with some very substantial packages to put in his pockets; and so he set off to learn about the new phase which this time Tom had entirely evolved out of his own mind, and instituted without any assistance.

"*Bon voyage, monsieur!*" cried madame, waving her hand gayly, "*et n'oubliez pas vos poches!*"

Assuredly woman is "wise off-hand," and shows to great advantage in a crisis extending over two or three meal-times.

Meanwhile Tom had presented himself at La Violette as a man who knew the world, and had found himself unexpectedly alone in St. Jean.

He had forced an opportunity—not a very felicitous one—to display his five-pound note, given to him that afternoon in an envelope tied round with string, to be returned to Mrs. Nodder; and he had intimated that Mr. Fairfax was coming to-morrow. But the manner in which he did these things, while raising no doubts as to Tom's ability to take care of himself, caused good Monsieur Gustave many misgivings for the welfare of other people, as affected by Tom's independence.

However, he discreetly concealed the fact that he had

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wired to Mr. Fairfax and given general notice that Tom was to be "shadowed," and on no account allowed to leave St. Jean.

"Shadowing" Tom for the first few hours proved a very easy task, for, having immediately demanded writing materials, he had set to work like a newspaper reporter under special pressure, and stolidly resisted all Monsieur Gustave's invitations to allow himself an interval for refreshments and a little rest, which invitation Monsieur Gustave repeated every half-hour, with unvarying exclamations of astonishment at Tom's prolixity of ideas, and admiration at his pertinacity.

Before it was quite dark Tom's work was finished. The result was a very bulky envelope, addressed to Mr. Fairfax, which he got Monsieur Gustave to stamp, and then he set off with it to the general post.

Here are the contents:

"La Violette, St. Jean,
"August 14, 188–.

"My Own Dearest Mr. Fairfax:

"You will not be angry when you have read this. Once more I am at St. Jean. I have run away—*but not from you*—NEVER! I should not run away from you—not if you sent me every day for beer in a jug, and it did not do you good, or any thing else.

"But, my own dearest Mr. Fairfax, we have made a great mistake, and I did not find it out till I got to St. Jean. This is the mistake: We have acted as if it was our fault. So when I found I was at St. Jean, I acted for

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myself. That is not disobedience, is it?—because there was nobody to disobey. Of course I don't count Mr. Bland.

"I acted in this way: I said, 'Mr. Bland, you take care of these till I come back, please,' and I gave him some bon-bons which he had given me. That was my tactic. Then I came here to write to Mr. Barowne, because Mr. Bland said that Mr. Barowne said that he loved me so much that he would do every thing that I asked him *for you.* So I am going to prove it. I am going to make him come and see you, and then we will all talk, and perhaps we will be friends.

"This is the letter, my own dear Mr. Fairfax, which I have written to Mr. Barowne. I hope you will like it. I wrote it my very best, and I tried my very hardest not to be rude. Please don't *cross* any thing out; and please post it for me as soon as ever you have read it, because I don't know where Greyfort is. Please don't be angry with me for acting for myself. I shall meet every train to-morrow. I feel very queer without you. I am very sad. I don't like the world—not now I know it. You don't know how very much I love you, my own dearest Mr. Fairfax; and it is for always—*always*—ALWAYS. Good-by till we meet to-morrow. And be sure you bring Wag. Poor Wag! This is a very sad phase, but I am glad I acted for myself. I wonder where Mr. Bland is now? I wonder what Mr. Barowne will say? I wonder what I should have done if I hadn't been famous in St. Jean? But that was not chance. That was why I stopped. No, my own dearest Mr. Fairfax, I shall never have any thing more to

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do with chance than I can possibly help; I don't think that I believe in it—not now. Good-by—good-by—good-by. Will you bring me a night-gown if there was one left?

"Your own only loving little boy,

"TOM BART BROWN."

This was the enclosure:

"LA VIOLETTE, ST. JEAN,

"August 4, 188–.

"MY DEAR OLD GOVERNOR:

"I have run away here; and I have a great deal to say; but I must be quick. Please excuse my bad spelling, because I have no dictionary.

"I shall divide my letter into three heads.

"First head.—How am I to know that you love me?—because you have separated me from Mr. Fairfax without telling me, and sent Mr. Bland, who can't speak French, and doesn't know me, and doesn't love me a bit, and I don't him; but of course he can't help it. That's all your fault.

"Second head.—Suppose you *do* love me—you began to be very kind—what are you going to do with me?—because I am not going to be just a baronet. I am going to be a painter, and the laws of England can't make me be a baronet when I'm grown up.

"Third and last head.—Is it true that you will do any thing for Mr. Fairfax?—because, if it is, you will come and see him at once about me, and we might be friends. I should like to love you very much if it was possible, and I shall do every thing you tell me till I am grown up, *if*

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you won't separate us. That is what I want you to do for Mr. Fairfax.

"If you don't do that, I shall never love you—and I shall never try to. The laws of England can't make me do that; and unless I do *that* nothing else will do any good at all, and you will be very sorry that you've found me out.

"I hope this letter won't give you any pain, because, of course, you are very old, and generally very ill. But it isn't my fault.

"Please give my love to Mrs. Barowne. I should be very sorry not to be able to love *her*. She won't want to separate us. She is very fond of Mr. Fairfax, and he is very fond of her.

"Now, my poor old dad, I must conclude; and remember that I want to love you with all my might, and it will be your fault if I don't, because the Barownes are a fighting family.

"You remember what the great Gambetta did when he was a boy—Mr. Fairfax told me—when he was at war with *his* father. He put one of his own eyes out. I shall not do that, because I shall want it when I'm grown up to paint with. But if you separate us I shall not eat—not more than I can help. And you remember what Henry the First did when his son was drowned. He never smiled again, and I sha'n't; and I sha'n't learn my lessons—not if I *like* them; and I sha'n't have clean hands—not even for Mrs. Barowne; and I sha'n't keep my feet dry; and I sha'n't try to live.

"Your very obedient son,

"TOM BART BROWN.

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"*P. S.*—I subscribe myself that way because it is polite, and I don't want to be rude to you; but I am very angry with you for sending Mr. Bland instead of coming, when we could have argued; and I shall never subscribe myself Tom Barowne while I am separated from Mr. Fairfax. I hope your gout is not bad. I should like to love you, and I should not like to have to give up loving Mrs. Barowne.

"T. B. B."

Such were the contents of Tom's bulky letter which he put in the post, after asking particularly if it would be delivered in Neuville to-morrow morning; and all the time and mental effort expended in that enterprise were—no, they were not thrown away by any means, for both Mr. Fairfax and Sir Henry Barowne ultimately received their letters; but it may be allowed that Tom had been needlessly concerned as to their swift and safe departure from St. Jean. For just as he re-entered La Violette on his speedy return from his accomplished mission Mr. Fairfax got out of the train at St. Jean.

And ten minutes later, when Tom was arduously making amends in one grandly compressed apology for all his previous slights to the cuisine of La Violette, Monsieur Gustave learned in one instant that whatever had happened to cause the boy's strange behavior it was nothing that had lessened his wonderful fondness for Monsieur Fairfax, or caused Tom any perplexity as to the manner in which he would greet him.

Tom heard Mr. Fairfax's voice from the hall at a moment when his mouth was particularly full and his

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plate empty, and he was demonstratively consenting—to Monsieur Gustave's delight—to be helped again.

But the next moment Monsieur Gustave was alone. He had no need to follow Tom for any confirmation of the opinion which he immediately formed from his face, and from other minor indications. So he stopped to pick up Tom's fork from the floor—he had taken a spoon with him—and to shake his head over Tom's Burgundy, which Tom had assured him he only took occasionally, and which Monsieur Gustave regretted he had taken on this occasion only to spill on the clean table-cloth. But he was a good-tempered man, and a great friend of Tom's. So after his first mild and suppressed expletive he only shook his head, and said:

"My faith! he does not even know that he has done it. I will tell my wife that I did it. I would do much more than that for Monsieur Tom."

Then he followed Tom to meet Monsieur Fairfax; but Monsieur Fairfax was not to be seen, or only a little bit of him. Tom had covered him up

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CHAPTER XX

"JUST THE SAME"

THE next day Tom was taken back—this time a willing and very communicative prisoner—to Le Bosquet to await, "safe and sound," the arrival of Sir Henry Barowne.

Sir Henry was expected on the following morning. So, at Mr. Fairfax's desire, Tom retired to bed in good time, in order to be well and fit for him. He had had a very exciting day, spent in travelling, in re-securing his luggage from Mr. Bland's custody at Domier—whom he saw no more—in acknowledging with due *empressement* the receptions of his astonished and delighted fellow-*voyageurs*, who had mourned his departure, and in preparing speeches for the great impending council. Tom had decided that this council should be held in the Barownes' old sitting-room, where he had already apportioned places and chairs, with an extra chair for Sir Henry Barowne to put his leg on, supposing his gout should require it.

It was with a sentence on his lips coined for to-morrow's use, and repeated many times, that Tom finally went to sleep. It conveyed an unimpeachable sentiment—setting forth that the privileges of paternity involve the duties of protection, and that whatever may be said for mothers, nature knows nothing of fathers by intuition.

Tom did not put the idea that way to himself. He put

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it much better, much more simply, much more trenchantly. But, unfortunately, one's last conscious thoughts, however logical, are liable to the most pitiable dereliction and distortion in the sport of dreams. And Wag, at once reasserting the importance of his existence, when Tom's tired mind shut him out no longer, immediately pounced on Tom's clenching argument—among all the other tangled threads of dissolving thought—and shook it, and rolled himself in it, and tore it, as if it had been the one antimacassar he particularly liked to worry.

So poor Tom had a troubled time for the early part of the night—sleeping uneasily, dreaming very strange and tangled dreams, and occasionally making audible statements of a very complex and contradictory nature—the result of his final rhetorical preparation for the morrow, under distracting circumstances.

Tom was with Sir Henry Barowne all this time, and all this time Sir Henry's thoughts were with Tom; and he was making as much haste as possible to be with him himself.

Contrary to his intentions, and to the promise he had made his wife, he had not broken his journey at Dijon. Reaching Neuchâtel about nine o'clock, he had wired to Le Bosquet announcing his speedy arrival. But Tom had been in bed some time when the message arrived. And Mr. Fairfax let him dream on—ravelling and unravelling his speeches for the impending council—and left Sir Henry the option of waking him or not.

He arrived about eleven o'clock, wofully fatigued and looking very ill; but he made very light of his indiscreet

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exertions, accosted Madame Bonjour with his gayest French manners, and met Mr. Fairfax with wonderful cordiality.

"Told you we should soon meet again, didn't I?" he said, walking to the door, which Madame Bonjour had just drawn to as she passed out, and latching it with his foot. "Not bad pegging for a chap with one foot in the grave, is it? How is he—the game little beggar? I thought you'd bring him."

Fairfax explained briefly the whole proceedings of the previous day, with its unexpected *dénouement.* And Sir Henry slapped his leg, and said Tom had done perfectly right, and he was deuced proud of him, and appreciated all Mr. Fairfax's kindness to the boy all the more from this final confirmation.

He repeated—what he had said in his letter—that only the horrible uncertainty of things, followed by his father's death, had made him delay so long to reveal the facts, knowing that Tom could never be in better hands than his. And very soon, with a miscellaneous string of compliments to Fairfax, curses at the discomforts of the journey, and a conglomerate confession of his moral delinquencies and physical ailments (during which he tapped his chest and put his hands to his back, and bent himself up with emphatic contortions and strong words), he proposed to take a candle and "see how the little beggar looked asleep!"

Fairfax lighted a candle for him, and assisted him—though his assistance was at first declined with mock indignation—up the stairs. He just pointed out Tom's room and left him—sad, more sad than he had been any

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moment in these two sad days, but with little resentment now against Tom's father. *He* would never pilot Tom through the critical stages of his life. Fairfax thought he would have his work set to pilot him back to England. The man was doomed. Fairfax was sure he was. But Sir Henry did not know it, or else he would not show it. He showed very little to most observers—Sir Henry Barowne—except his temper, and his grimly aggressive contempt of life at large.

But Tom was not life at large. And George Fairfax did not know, and Madame Bonjour and her visitors—who had heard something of the wonderful story, and gossiped, and gesticulated, and laughed—they did not know what Tom was to him. They did not know that he was the magnet, fixed and unfailing—the only one—discovered late—perhaps too late—by which that often shipwrecked man now steered his course. They did not suppose that he had crowded on every stitch of sail in his breaking-up bark, and run with the storm to get to port, just because he feared his bark *was* breaking up.

And so alone, with a candle in his hand, he noiselessly entered Tom's room, closed the door, set down the candle, and went up to the bed on tip-toe. He breathed only very softly as he bent down to look closer at the face of his sleeping boy. The look on his own white, haggard face was keenly searching—searching enjoyment, and half doubting whether he would find it. There was no mistaking his affection; and there was no mistaking the pride and satisfaction with which the first sight of Tom's face flushed and brightened his own.

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The boy's cheeks and lips were rosy with health—and very clean. His rich, brown, shiny hair was tumbled over his white forehead down to his darker, beautifully-arched eyebrows. His pretty throat was exposed; and his little, firm chin—one of Tom's most beautiful features—was very much in evidence—in all which particulars he would have satisfied any mother if she had wished him to be modelled in colored wax. But under his chin, on the coverlid, lay one of Tom's little hands, doubled up tightly, and that was not clean enough to be modelled in colored wax. How could it be? It was always busy; it was a workman's hand; an honest, horny hand that was washed before every meal, and usually, in addition, rubbed deferentially on something before it was offered to be shaken; but it was a hand never irreproachable to the fastidious, except during the early part of Sunday morning.

But Sir Henry's eyes, resting finally on that little hand, seemed to find even more joy in it than in Tom's face, for it made him smile. Perhaps it was more eloquent—it had so often lain in his own, and led him about, and done things for him; and depicted and demonstrated what could not be made clear without it—that little hand which had so much power, even now, and might some day——

But Sir Henry's reflection was cut short, and he drew himself up suddenly, all the sadness and softness flying out of his face.

Tom had brought his other hand out of bed, and thrust them both into his eyes, blinking, and turning over on to his side, when he forthwith propounded the following startling proposition:

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"Mr. Fairfax is my father—I have brought him up—he is a funny dog—he was at war with his father—*merci*—no more, thank you—no more chance—chance is the work of Mr. Barowne—Mr. Bland said so—so I shall not eat any thing—and we sha'n't apologize. Oh! Mr. Fairfax, who's that?"

Tom sat bolt upright now, and rubbed his eyes with his knuckles this time until he was able to see with them.

"Oh, I say, where—Mr. Barowne!—oh, I say—how do you do, Mr. Barowne?"

"Pretty well, Tom. How have *you* been getting on?" He held out his hand, and Tom took it, and squeezed it with a dubious grin, while he still blinked and shaded his eyes with the hand that was at liberty.

"Oh, I'm very well. But—oh! Mr. Barowne, you *do* look ill. I—I *am* sorry for you. But I can't love you till I know what you're going to do. What *are* you going to do, Mr. Barowne?"

"Well, I'm thinking of going to bed, just now. Didn't mean to wake you. How's Wag?"

"Oh, he's very well. We are all very well; but of course we are all in great trouble. Have you seen Mr. Fairfax? What time is it? Oh, I say, you do look ill, now I can see you."

"Well, I'm not grand. Yes, I've seen Mr. Fairfax. Have you given up getting fond of me?"

"No—oh, no, Mr. Barowne; not yet. Not till I'm quite obliged to. Where is Mrs. Barowne?"

"She's coming on in a couple of days. Can't gad

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about as I can. How's Courte? Got his nose in a sling still?"

Tom gave a little laugh.

"You are just the same, Mr. Barowne. I—I was afraid you would be quite—quite different. But, you know, we shall have to be serious. Do you love me?"

"I believe I do. I honestly believe I do, Tom. In fact, I'm sure of it, or I shouldn't have played Satan and Tommy with my old bones like this. Now go to sleep, and we'll have the cabinet meeting to-morrow. I've seen the chairs. Will you give me a kiss?"

"Oh, don't go! I'm not going to sleep again. Don't go just yet. Stand up a minute. There now, sit down—nearer to me—and put that round you. I *am* sorry you look so ill. And you are not a bit angry. It is funny."

Tom divested himself of half the bedclothes, and stood up on the bed to throw them round his visitor, who had obediently stood up and sat down again as requested. Then Tom put his arms round him and kissed him.

"I never thought you'd come like this. You'll never prevent me loving you now. Are you really my own father, Mr. Barowne?"

"Yes, Tom. You're not a bit like me, thank God! but I am, and we shall have to make the best of it while it lasts."

"Oh, it doesn't matter, not—not now you've come like this. I don't think it will matter a bit. How is your gout?"

"That's better. Haven't had my leg on a chair since

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you took it down. You did more for my gout than all the doctors. And what do you think, Tom?"

"What? Make yourself more comfortable."

"I've been going on with your medicines. Hanged if I haven't got to like 'em—for your sake, you know."

"Do you mean Yvorne, Mr. Barowne?"

"Slops of that kind. I take nothing else now, and it keeps me very busy."

"Well, it's not so bad as brandy—not a good lot of it. But you look worse than you did. I *am* sorry. Do you feel worse?"

"Not all over. I've less pain. But it's here now. I've no bandbox—it feels as if it had been kicked in. Bellows leak. Yes, I believe I'm worse. I'm a poor stick, Tom, to be your father; but you'll do me good; you might fix me up."

"I will. It's your chest you mean. I'll rub it for you. I'll rub it two or three times a day if you'll let me. Then it's quite true that you'll do any thing for Mr. Fairfax?"

"Any thing. What does he want?"

"Why, he wants *me*—I mean I want *him;* I want us all to go about together, and to live together when we go home. Greyfort is big enough, isn't it?"

"Rather!"

"Then it's all—it's all done. There's nothing to settle. It *is* funny. You're not—you are not going to be angry with me *at all.* And I haven't been rude to you, have I?"

"You haven't, my boy. But why didn't you come to see me, eh?" He drew Tom closer to him with the arm that

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was round him. "*You've* steam enough for a long run; and your legs aren't in a consumption, certainly. Stand up again, Tom; I believe you've grown."

Tom promptly disentangled himself from the bedclothes and from Sir Henry's arm, and stood up on the bed—as tall as he could make himself—to be tumbled, after extensive anatomical soundings, which upset his equilibrium, into his father's arms—face to face with him.

"Why wouldn't you come to your poor old dad, eh? It's nearly been the death of me, coming to you."

"Oh, I *would* have come"—Tom emphasized the averment with several kisses—"I would have come to—to America. We would have both come—Mr. Fairfax and me—anywhere—and—and—we will come now—and I will be a baronet, or any thing you like—now you have come like this. But Mr. Bland wanted to steal me—and—and separate us. You can ask Mr. Fairfax. He never mentioned us all living together."

"Oh, Mr. Bland's an idiot."

"Well, he can't speak French; and *I* don't think he's seen much of the world. He couldn't have understood *you*, could he? Did *you* tell him Mr. Fairfax was to come too?"

"Of course I did. I said we should always be glad to see him wherever we were—that he couldn't come wrong."

"Oh, I say! I am glad I made such a fool of him now. I sha'n't be sorry for that any more. And look how ill it's made you. Oh, you *do* look ill—I am sorry—and we would have come in a minute, my poor old—old—should you like me to call you *father?*"

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"Well, if you could manage it, Tom, I should. I should appreciate the compliment—I should be deuced set up with it."

"Oh, I shall be very pleased. I have never called Mr. Fairfax 'father,' you know, though he has really been my father; so I sha'n't forget. But you are a baronet, aren't you?"

"Well, baronets can be fathers, can't they? Most of 'em are. It's their first aim in life. A baronet who hasn't a son is a failure, Tom. You've saved me from being a complete failure—I've got as near as I could."

"Oh, I *am* glad. I didn't know that. But I thought their children called them 'sir,' and other people 'my lord,' or something."

"Their children generally call them 'father,' Tom. Other people call them all kinds of names—I'll tell you another time—'pillars of the throne,' 'titled blacklegs,' 'the flower of society,' and 'the scum of civilization.' But they don't care—they hold on; they're of a holding-on breed, the best of 'em; they don't care what people call them if they only have a son to be called something similar."

Tom looked puzzled for a moment, and then laughed.

"You are just the same, Mr. Barowne—oh, I mean father. You *are* funny. But *I* want to know about baronets. What do they do? Do they make the laws?"

"Well, some do; and some make lawsuits. Some are soldiers—they make good soldiers, and some make parsons; but most of them make themselves comfortable."

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"And what shall you do, father, now you are a baronet?"

"What! I? Oh, I shall go on persevering with Yvorne, and things of that kind—only more strictly—much more. I shall put myself in your hands, Tom. You shall just build me up into the kind of baronet that you like. We'll begin to-morrow. We must go in first for a few outside repairs. Now, good-night, Tom. I mustn't keep you awake, and—I'm pumped—I'm a bit faint—I mean hungry. Hanged if you haven't given me an appetite. Haven't had one since I left Le Bosquet."

"Very well; good-night, Mr. — good-night, father. I'm very happy. Go and get a good supper; and send Mr.——"

"Oh, here; I forgot. I had to give you a kiss for—for your mother. There. Now, then, out goes the candle. Hold on to the bedstead. Oh, Lord! where am I?"

"Oh, I say, Mr.—father!"

"D——nation! Oh, I didn't mean that. I've nearly killed myself. Where are you, Tom? Where's the door? Those d——d Swiss shutters."

"Here. I'm here. You're going off with my bed-clothes."

"So I am. Well, I might be sprung. I do feel a bit shaken. Oh, here you are—take 'em. They're on the floor now. Get a light. You've been too much for me, Tom. You've got into my head. I—I feel very dizzy."

"Wait a bit, father. Here, give me your hand; I'll lead you." And Tom sprang from the bed and took hold of Sir Henry's hand.

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"Yes; I'm right now. Go on—and mind that other bedstead. What's it doing here?"

"It was the mantel-piece. It's there. Come on, father."

"All right. Only it wasn't there a minute ago. And you're such a plunger!"

"There! You know your way now, don't you? Don't make a great noise, because Madame Bayer there has got something the matter with her nerves, and she's not going to stop if she can't sleep."

"Isn't she? I *am* sorry. Yes, I see where I am now. That's the way to the studio."

"Don't forget to send Mr. Fairfax."

"All right."

"I want to tell him it is all settled, and you are going to—to——"

"To adopt him. That's it. I ought to have a younger son. Get into bed again; and—I say, Tom, don't forget to say your prayers, my boy. Now for these devilish stairs."

"I've said them once. Good-by; send him at once. I *am* happy."

"So am I—regularly jolly. I think I'll go down the banister. Hanged if I know how else to go. Oh, Lord!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Barowne?"

"Nothing. You go back to bed."

"Oh, I say, Mr.—father—you'll fall. Wait for me. Are you dizzy? There—take hold—take hold of the banister. I've got you. Oh, I say!"

"Here, let me sit down. God bless you, Tom, I'm—I'm

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glad I've reached you. I've broken in two. Fetch him up, Tom. Fetch Mr. Fairfax. My gout's come on."

"Oh, you are ill! I had no idea. Oh, my poor, dear old father! Are you—why, you are going to faint!"

"No, I'm not; but I can't get up. Tom, if you shout, I'll break your head. You'd wake Madame What's-her-name. Fetch him—quietly. Oh, Lord! what a fool I've been—my boy—my boy!"

Sir Henry did faint—outright; but he soon came round again, to find only Mr. Fairfax and Tom beside him, and no commotion whatever observable from the event. This pleased him very much, and he showed his gratitude by taking Fairfax's assistance and advice until he was safe in bed, as well as by telling Tom as soon as he opened his eyes that "he was a darned good little family doctor."

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CHAPTER XXI

"ARE ALL OUR WANDERINGS O'ER?"

BIRTHDAYS are sad days to all but children, and one would feel grateful if all anniversaries could be abolished, save that it may be well to honor and protect the ruins of the great past—the castles and abbeys of our golden past—albeit men strew their blessed precincts with paper bags and empty beer-bottles. And every great new purpose and resolution, and every new, wide outlook upon life—they have their anniversaries, too—often the saddest of all; and these are only bearable because no one knows of them, and we have not to meet them with the conventional grin, and are not tortured with any impossible "happy returns" of them, and can be as sad as we like.

George Fairfax, brewing new resolves out of old memories, sat in his room at Le Bosquet alone. He was presumably at work on some pen-and-ink sketches, a branch of art to which he now intended to devote his exclusive attention for some time. He had found several English illustrated papers open to his productions. One or two small checks had unexpectedly straggled in to him since his return to Le Bosquet for work which he had done in the Rue du Lac and sent off thence post-haste to the editors with the intimation that the smallest acknowledgments

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would satisfy the contributor if they only came by return of post.

However, when the acknowledgments did come, after several weeks, they served another purpose—a higher one than finding a week's rent for the room in the Rue du Lac.

They induced Fairfax to believe that with method and industry he might make quick pen-and-ink sketching a paying thing, and Fairfax now had particular reasons for being glad of a paying thing. Principally this: Madame Bonjour's rich uncle's commission, and the following further commissions which she assured him might be taken as already booked, had all proceeded from one comprehensive order of Sir Henry Barowne's—that he should be kept busy—a secret which had leaked out between madame's simplicity and Tom's bent for finding things out. But Fairfax's heart was not in his new venture just now, though he sat at the table as if at work.

It was a calm, clear evening. His window was wide open, and away from the white winding road up the mountain, over the gray patches of parti-colored verdure, over the old sweet-scented, flower-smothered garden of Le Bosquet, there floated in to him the evening sounds of that pleasant, peaceful region—fitful fragmentary sounds of a tuneful, untroubled life, as it seemed to him.

He heard the bees drowsily humming over the lavender bed under his window, the twitter of the swallows skimming under the eaves, the jingling jangling *diligence* dimly seen amid a cloud of dust in the far distance, the clear-cut

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car! car! of the high-sailing jackdaws, with the somnolent murmur of human voices from the visitors strolling about the walks.

And more distinctly amid all these sounds, yet seeming to be part of them—the melody of a life from which he felt himself separate, distant—he heard in the next room, the Barownes' sitting-room, through the window, as wide open as his own, the voices of Sir Henry and Lady Barowne and Tom.

He had heard Lady Barowne singing one of Tom's favorite songs—it puzzled even Fairfax to know why it was a favorite with Tom—"You in the light; I in the night." He had heard Sir Henry say "Bravo!" and soon after cough himself nearly into a fit. He had heard the popping of a cork, some inevitable expletives from Sir Henry in seeking a piece of music, and several of Tom's short, merry little laughs; and all the sounds alike had made him sad, because they all seemed alike to be only parts of the same sweet melody of a dying day, floating in to him in his loneliness—beautiful broken fragment of familiar music from the distance, which he only heard as an outsider, a chance listener, as one whom it was not meant for, and who might never, never hear it more.

Fairfax was again on the eve of quitting Le Bosquet—this time alone. But his departure was not looked upon by Tom and the Barownes as he looked upon it himself. To them he was going off for a week or so on a sketching tour. Tom did not know yet on what day he thought of leaving. But Fairfax knew that he was saying good-by indefinitely—until, at least, Tom had grown familiar with

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the new *régime* without him, and had passed a term at school.

Of course he need not have been quite so sad as he was, had he not been afflicted with that soul-tormenting malady which is called the poetic temperament.

He had made good and true friends. Ever since Sir Henry Barowne had arrived, now more than a fortnight ago, he had shown himself uniformly cordial, and had lavishly expressed his gratitude and good wishes—expressed them after a fashion so characteristically spasmodic and parenthetical that no one could doubt his sincerity. Lady Barowne had reached Le Bosquet three days later, and of her friendship, a much more prized possession, he had received new and ample confirmation, expressed in the sweetest and wisest way; but, unfortunately, Fairfax looked upon Lady Barowne's friendship as too delicately beautiful a joy for him to dwell on, except at a distance. While as for Tom, he could see him whenever he wanted. But his boy was to go another way. There it was. His boy! No! he was no longer to be his boy. They were parting. And who can unwind and tell the length of that knotted line that lies ravelled up in a first great good-by?

So Fairfax, who was just now supposed to be so very busy finishing and sending off some of those sketches of Swiss life, mused with himself until another sound—sweet and familiar too, but demanding an answer—floated in through the open window.

"I say!"

He put his head out, to find Tom lolling out from the next window.

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"Mr. Fair—— Oh, haven't you done yet? I have."

"No, not yet; but I'm getting on. Have you given Mrs. Nodder my love?"

"Yes; but I'm going to read it to you—I'm going to read it to you and—and—father, when you come in, perhaps. Mrs.—mother is reading it now. Wait a bit. . . Mr. Fair—— Oh, mother says you must be as quick as you can. She means you and her to win to-night, and—wait a bit. . . *Mr.* Fairfax—oh, you haven't gone. Here, Mr.—father says I'm to pass you the cigars. They are those you like—the Véritables. Oh, I thought we could reach. I'll come round."

"No, never mind, Tom. Your father is very kind. Pitch one here; I'll catch it."

So Tom threw one of the cigars, and Fairfax caught it, and left the window to get a light. In a moment he appeared again, puffing out the smoke, and nodded gayly to Tom, who had also popped inside and reappeared.

"Grand evening, Tom. We shall have a fine day to-morrow."

"Yes; won't it be jolly? The old shandrydang is to be up at nine, and Mrs.—mother's lent me a pair of her gloves, and I'm going to have five francs if—if I drive you from the door here through the town without sticking fast. Wait a minute, Mr. Fairfax."

Tom dodged in again, and again reappeared in the same moment.

"Mother wanted to know what you and she were going to have if you kept your seats, because father will *have* to keep his, and she says it will serve him right. But they

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never saw me drive Captain, did they? and I've driven him right through Barnfield with a load of beer-barrels."

Tom's attention was diverted at this point by the laughter behind him which his last remark had elicited. He turned round for an explanation, and so missed the smile on Fairfax's face, which was not a merry one.

"Father says he would have been proud to see me if the town was busy. He once drove a hansom about Oxford for an hour, until he was stopped. He says it was good practice, but it cost him ten pounds. Mother says I'm to give over chattering to you, or we sha'n't get a game of whist to-night; and she wants you and her to have your revenge. How does that cigar go? It smells nice."

"Finely, Tom, I'll try to be with you shortly." And so saying, he disappeared from the window. But before he had well turned round he was summoned again.

"Mr. Fairfax—— Oh, never mind." Tom nodded his head apologetically. "I'm not to bother you. They'll ask you when you come. It's about Mr. Barowne—about father being painted. I say,"—Tom leaned further out of the window, and spoke in a lower voice, while he endeavored, by speaking through his hands, to direct his remarks solely to Fairfax's ears,—"he *does* look well again this evening. He *is* getting better. He is nearly the color that he was the night before last, and he will be—he will look even better when the lamp comes in. I say, couldn't you paint him at night? Couldn't we get an idea? Couldn't——" Tom stopped again. He discovered that his remarks had been overheard, notwithstanding his precaution.

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"Yes, you could." This was preceded by a grunt of dubious meaning, and followed by a laugh that was not infectious. "You might call me 'Guttering in the socket,' or——"

"Oh, I say, he's heard! Good-by. Be quick! I'm going to do something for mother until you come."

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CHAPTER XXII

"THE HEART KNOWETH"

So Fairfax turned in, and endeavored to make an end of his pen-and-ink sketch, showing the Swiss soldier, on the Place d'Armes of Neuville, learning to manipulate the new rifle. But his efforts were futile. He found himself absorbed, without any regard to time, in making the face of the little boy who was looking up at the instructing officer an exact reproduction of Tom's, as if it had been for a miniature portrait.

And as soon as he became partially satisfied with the result he found the pen lying idle between his fingers, and his thoughts all gone for a holiday in their old haunts. He heard Tom reading aloud his letter to Mrs. Nodder, stopping at the end of every half-dozen lines, and dropping the impressive monotone adapted to the text for controversial purposes.

These controversies arose out of Sir Henry's running remarks, which were always brief and seemingly gruff; but they were frequently signalled by a laugh from Lady Barowne, and Tom's monotone rolled on after them as sonorously as before. Apparently Sir Henry Barowne and Tom had resumed acquaintanceship on the old footing, and Lady Barowne had just walked back as easily and naturally into Tom's life as she walked back (with fresh flowers for the vases) into her old rooms.

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They seemed to have just taken up the threads where they had dropped them, and though they continued to be an absorbing wonder to the *visiteurs*, and a source of peculiarly melancholy meditation to Mr. Fairfax, they doubtless experienced no strange feeling at all among themselves.

Tom rarely called Sir Henry "father" yet without first stumbling over one or two other appellations, and at present he addressed or alluded to Sir Henry's wife as "Mrs. Barowne," "Lady Barowne," and "mother," just as the occasion or impulse prompted him.

But two things soon became very plain: Sir Henry Barowne had found a son—he showed that, and Tom had found a mother—that was made plain by Lady Barowne.

As for Tom, he lived daily now in a state of tranquil unexpectancy, asking for nothing, and anticipating no possible disappointment. He entertained no doubt of his father's ultimate recovery; and Lady Barowne's happy smile as she called him "her own little boy, who was always going to take care of her," and Mr. Fairfax's gay promises to show him "a great deal more of the world yet"—they never raised a vexing question in Tom's mind. Children do not know what "incompatibility" means, and "impossibility" need not be crossed out of *their* dictionaries, for they do not think any thing about such a thing until it has happened.

Tom had carried his point—he had conquered, and he sighed for no more conquests; but like a magnanimous victor, whose foes had surrendered without making terms, he spared them all humiliations.

He would go to school, of course he would, in a month

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or so, and be content at present only to learn such new phases of life and see the world—always with Mr. Fairfax, whoever else might be of the party—as would be compatible with reasonable holidays and a boy in training to be a baronet.

Mrs. Nodder was to live at Greyfort to the end of her days, but Mr. Fairfax was to be at liberty to pursue his vocation and become a famous painter where and how he liked, provided always that he should be accessible in Tom's holidays, and would then come to Greyfort if Tom didn't go to visit him.

This clause was most cordially supported by Sir Henry and Lady Barowne; and Fairfax promised faithfully to adhere to it, and he meant to do so. He meant at all costs to keep in close touch with Tom; and Sir Henry Barowne had gratitude enough, apart from all his lavish inclinations toward humoring Tom, to make him look upon this arrangement as *bona fide* and beyond abrogation. Doubtless he had the sagacity of a father, however long latent such parental qualities may have lain, to perceive that Fairfax's influence, if it could be retained unimpaired, would be invaluable for his son, however much it reflected on his own. It is passion only that makes fools of us—love makes us wise.

"Of course," said Sir Henry,—it was a jest only fit to be cried at, considering the jester; but Tom laughed happily, —"an extra father is not a thing to be sneezed at. You must take great care of him, Tom. Keep him down to Yvorne, and prop him up as long as ever you can. It will make me feel a trifle more at liberty."

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Yes, Tom laughed at that, and took it as one more certain sign that his father could not feel or be so ill—so very ill as he looked.

What Lady Barowne's ideas on the dual paternity were she never showed—except, perchance, to herself. But she knew Sir Henry Barowne was dying—dying certainly, though he might drag out another year, or even two. The doctors had told her so, and their message had sent her to her own room to shut herself up and cry; but before then she had told herself that he was dying, and to what effect? Ah! people write in locked diaries, and confess curious mental conditions to their closest friends; but the heart ponders some things which it does not even convey into thought—especially a woman's heart, which is acutely logical and too delicately accurate and quick in its computations even to collaborate with its own mind. "The heart knoweth"—yes, it knoweth many things which it keeps to itself, for the wise, wary mind will not acknowledge them.

Under the very fountain of those tears, down in the deep soft bed of her heart, lay the germs of some possible greater love—greater, more outbranching, more efflorescent than any which had yet been allowed to grow.

What? Hush! Do you wish to imply that Lady Barowne——

Peace, my gentle censor; we imply nothing. We dare not! Your hypocrisy is only a little more demonstrative than ours, and it is hereditary and excusable in us both.

No, the weary, disappointed, wasted heart of a pure woman who has loved amiss does not plan and build

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bridges to happiness over her husband's grave before he dies. She weeps, and she shakes her head when any thoughts of that coming life enter her brain. But do *you* suppose that the heart forgets even then the best part of its own existence—the moments which passed away like flashes out of heaven, and have become eternities in the memory—the dreams which died as soon as they were born, and became thereby immortal? No, the heart does not forget; but it keeps all these things to itself, because the clumsy, suspicious mind makes such a muddle of them when it tries to look into them at all.

Feeble, cowardly, incompetent are those psychological probings which we proudly call self-examinations. We cannot examine ourselves. Can we see ourselves unconscious? When we are crushed under sorrow, can we tell that we are struggling after joy, as the bulb that is crushed into the earth struggles after the sunlight?

When we survive the wearing fever of disappointment, and sink into the deep tranquillity of resignation, and look away from the tangled and broken loves of earth and dream of heaven, do we know that more than ever then we are saying, "Give! Give!" with the heart's old unallayable yearning—the yearning for that which it seldom finds in this world, and sometimes does—one deep, sweet, self-drowning draught of unmocking wine from the Love-gathered vintage of Life?

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CHAPTER XXIII

FAMILY AFFAIRS

But meanwhile Tom had got deep into his letter to Mrs. Nodder; and Sir Henry's interest, shown in his accustomed way, was growing keener.

"'And so, my dear Mrs. Nodder,'" Tom read, throwing out his chest, as recently instructed, and not forgetting to speak "as if a breathless audience were hanging upon his lips," "'you see, I knew there was something that had been dropped out. But it was not the Bart; it was only the "a" out of Barowne. But my grandfather subscribed himself "Thomas Barowne, Bart." That was what my mother showed me, and I have always subscribed myself "Tom Bart Brown" ever since she died. Isn't that funny? And we were both right, you and me. Nobody in our family was ever christened "Bart," because it means baronet, and some of us have been baronets ever since the Civil Wars, and my father is one now. So, you see, there really is a "Bart" in our name——'"

"Oh, it's fairly in; it's fast on. Go on, Tom."

"'But, my dear Mrs. Nodder, you need not think that I shall love you any less because my father is a baronet. I now know what a baronet is, and how it comes—being a baronet. It sometimes comes when nobody expects it, like a thief in the night.'"

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Sir Henry grunted :

"The last didn't ; hope the next won't."

Lady Barowne looked up, smiled, and resumed her work.

Tom proceeded :

"'My father was not intended for a baronet. But a good many people who were intended died ; so he had to be one.'"

"That's nicely put, Tom. I'm poor material ; but I'm doing my best."

"'*I* shall have to be one, because I am his eldest son, when——'"

Tom came to a halt, left the improvised reading-desk, and went up to his father's chair.

"I never meant to read this bit to you ; it isn't—it doesn't seem nice to read you this. Here, you read it ; you don't mind me saying that to Mrs. Nodder, do you ? —because she wouldn't understand me without. You know, I told her all wrong about baronets."

"'When my father is dead,'" read Sir Henry ; "'but then I hope I shall be a man.'

"Mind it ! of course I don't. You've nice feelings, my boy. Go ahead. Why, the—the folks who would have had to be baronets if you hadn't turned up were talking about my death every breakfast-time. Weren't they, Kate ?"

Lady Barowne only smiled again, and said :

"Go on, Tom."

"Yes, go on, my boy. Tell you what, Kate, I shall support that Band of Hope thing, Penny Readings—what

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are they called?—in the school-room. I will take the chair, and do the village some good, and Tom shall show 'em how it's done. Go ahead—go back to the lectern."

So Tom laughed, and again proceeded:

"'So, you see, my dear Mrs. Nodder, a baronet is only born sometimes; but a great painter is always born—not made. I shall be both.'"

"Hold a minute, Tom; what's that?"

"I shall be both a baronet and a painter too. You said I should."

"Oh, yes; that's all right—now I see where the 'both' comes in. Yes, you can tack on two or three other businesses if you like; but be a decent baronet."

"'I am so glad that you will like living at Greyfort. Sir Henry and Lady Barowne send their compliments. And it is quite true that you will have nothing to do—and you will have tea in your own room—and I shall often have tea with you—and you will call me Tom—and we shall be just the same, only I shall be fonder of you because you wanted us to come back, and sent us that five pounds. My dear Mrs. Nodder, my father says that you shall be rewarded a hundred per cent. in this present world, and do nothing but read the paper and knit socks in——'"

"What? In the world to come? No, I didn't say that, Tom."

"No, of course not," Tom laughed, and exchanged glances with Lady Barowne—"'in your own room'—because, you know,"—Tom turned to his audience—"Mrs. Nodder has not been a servant. She was never *our* ser-

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vant. And when she took care of me, why, she was more like my—my—well, I don't know what she was like, but I know I had to do what she told me; but she was very kind when Mr. Patterwell did not put her out."

Both Tom's hearers laughed at this.

"I'm very anxious to see Mrs. Nodder, dear," said Lady Barowne.

"Yes, so am I. Go on, Tom. We may want the old lady's help sometimes. You've given us a tip there, Tom. Hasn't he, my dear?"

So Tom grinned, found his place, and proceeded:

"'Mr. Fairfax is going soon on a grand sketching tour, but that does not mean he will be a tourist, because he will not be always idle and go to places to say that he has been. He will sketch Switzerland with a pen and ink for people who can't come, and make fun of the tourists. You will see them in the comic papers. He is now very famous, though sometimes very sad. I love him now more than ever I loved him in my life, and so does my father now, as well as Lady Barowne.'"

"Quite right, Tom—quite right. I think your mother loves him a bit the best, but I'm catching her up."

"'My dear Mrs. Nodder, once more I believe in chance—with all my heart; and I am very, very sorry that I said what I did against the angels. But, you see, they went on—they move in a mysterious way. See what a good thing it was you quarrelled with Mr. Diggle, though we couldn't come back. And you thought it was all for nothing. My dear Mrs. Nodder, nothing is for nothing; but every thing is not explained to every-body.

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But you know that every thing comes round to him (and to her too) who will but wait. Mr. Fairfax told me that, and I have discovered that it is true.'"

"There's not a doubt about it. Bravo!"

"'Wag is better than ever. He will be very happy at Greyfort. There are a lot of dogs there, and they will all be mine—but not as Wag is—my own old Wag. He is going to have a collar with his name on a silver shield. Father is going to buy it, and will always take him out when I'm at school. He still goes into people's houses and steals, and he will lick any body who wants him. But it doesn't matter, I love him. You know, my dear Mrs. Nodder, we often love people that nobody else does; and we do not just love those that do things for us—as Mr. Patterwell used to say—because if we did he would have loved you more. I think we often love those most that we do most things for. Look at Mr. Fairfax, and look at my father, and Lady Barowne, and you. You all love me just because you do, and nothing else. And I don't love Mr. Patterwell, though he once did my Latin for me, just because I don't. Isn't that funny? Father says life is funny; but Mr. Fairfax says it is a serious thing. Perhaps it is both. Perhaps you won't understand this; so I will stop.'"

"Well, you've stopped just at the right place. Hanged if a lawyer could twist that if you'll leave it there. Tell you what, Tom; you shall write my letters. I'm no hand at all, and I've a lot waiting—a deuced lot. What does your mother say?"

"What, about life being funny and serious?"

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"No, no, dear—your letter," said Lady Barowne. "I think it's very good," and she laughed a happy laugh.

"No, Tom. I know what she says on that subject. She used to take Mr. Fairfax's side altogether, but she's coming round. Look at her now! Did you ever see her so frivolous? And *I* didn't say life was nothing *but* funny, you young dog. I don't think this lung is funny, and I don't think—but never mind; the doctors don't know every thing, and I'm a lot better. Now go on, Tom; I'm not half tired yet. Yes, you can stand here by the window. Days are shortening fast. Kate—mother, isn't he old enough for an Eton suit? I'm sure he's big enough. Now, that's the point to keep your chin at. Attention!"

Sir Henry shouted the last word at the top of his voice.

"Oh, Henry! You're as noisy as Tom, and I'm sure you'll be ill. Do lie down on the couch for half-an-hour. You know, the doctor particularly told you not to talk much, and you are shouting like that."

"I forgot; but I sha'n't shout like that again till to-morrow. Oh, Lord! it's like a knife just here—in the old place—but I've felt very well and jolly to-night."

"There? That's just where I rub you, isn't it? I am sorry. But I must rub you a great deal more. And you mustn't stop me; must he, mother?"

"No, dear; he must submit. And you must make him rest more. That is what he wants."

"Yes, yes, Kate, you are right. Rest! That is what I've wanted. Oh, I think I shall pull myself together

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now. I never should have done without. And I never knew what it was. Rest! Yes, it's better than I had any idea of."

"Then you'll promise to take it, father?"

"I will, Tom—I like it—and I'm in good hands. Your mother is wonderfully patient. I didn't always like rest, Tom; and you are a kind little chap. Now, finish the letter; see, sit here, and never mind throwing your chest out and reading to the village—just read it to me and your mother quietly. Yes, I have been a bit too rowdy to-night, but I'm picking up my crumbs."

"Very well," said Tom, again finding his place; "there's not much more, and I'll go on rubbing that place till—till it's gone."

"All right! You're boring down to it; you got through the skin this morning."

"Oh, yes; I forgot that. And you made me spill the stuff, but there's plenty left. Did I really rub some skin off? I am sorry."

"That doesn't matter, Tom; I've plenty of that. I'm not much else, and it will all come on again. At least," he added, after a moment's pause, suddenly throwing a tone of petulant weariness into the words, "if there's time for it—if it has the chance."

Lady Barowne lifted her eyes and looked across at her husband's worn, emaciated frame and thin white face (the flush, which had appeared to Tom so desirable for the portrait, had all gone now) as he sat leaning back, exhausted, exactly opposite the window. The sad sweet light of the fading day seemed to have flooded the room

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with a sudden quiet, and to fall with a new tenderness on Sir Henry's heavy and dark-ringed eyes.

"You have tired yourself to-night, dear." She had gone up to him and caressed his hair, and let her hand rest on his shoulder as she looked tenderly into his face. "But you mustn't say those things; you don't mean it, Henry," she whispered, "but it's hard for me, dear." And the film that came over her deep blue eyes as she turned them away, and the little lingering nervous pressure of her hand as she took it off his shoulder, told him how much those few words meant, and how much she felt them.

Immediately the old gay carelessness came into the sick man's face and voice, but he caught his wife's hand as she was going back to her seat and pressed it.

"All right, Kate."

"If there's time for it? You do say such funny things. What does he mean, mother? If it has the chance? Why, a great big cut will get better in a fortnight!"

"Mean? Why, yes, of course it will, if it's let alone, but it won't if you make a nutmeg grater of me every morning. Now trot out Mrs. Nodder again; the old lady will be tired of waiting."

"Oh, I understand. Very well; where had I got to? To-morrow morning I'll rub you very, very carefully and very slowly."

But Tom did not, for, as events turned out, when to-morrow morning had come, Sir Henry was too ill to be rubbed at all.

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CHAPTER XXIV

A WAKING DREAM

Mrs. Nodder's letter had been disposed of some half-hour ago. Lady Barowne sat contentedly winding wool from Tom's fingers. She, too, heard the hum and tinkle of the dying day as it floated in through the still open window. And she had heard Fairfax pacing about in the next room. She had heard him, in the pauses of their own talk and merry-making, humming over and whistling an air which she had played and sung to earlier in the evening. But these sounds lent no melancholy of their own to her musings, no murmur of near-coming good-bys. No! she might be sad; but it was not the old sadness of being alone. She would never again be "as lonely as paint could make her."

Every time her eyes rested on Tom's face one could read that. It could be read when he made her laugh with his impromptu remarks, and when with his emphasizing fore-finger he invited her solemn attention to some weighty consideration. But it could be read most clearly, most unmistakably, when Tom was least aware of it—when her glance wandered unobserved from her husband's face to Tom's, and lost again the anxious, pained look which had come over it. "*He* would remain. He would be her boy *then* as much as now."

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Sir Henry just now had no sad thoughts of one kind or another, or if he had he was keeping them religiously to himself. He was smoking a cigarette in comparative content, and rehearsing, almost in silence, some half-forgotten card trick for Tom's benefit. In an unguarded moment he had alluded to the process, and displayed the result of this trick without reflecting on the trouble of correlating cause and effect, and Tom's uncomfortable hankering after explanations.

So he smoked on over the spread-out cards, with only an occasional grunt of impatience, and a few disconnected remarks. The remarks were to the effect that "he'd got it," and that "he hadn't," that "he was just pulling the string," and that "the figure wouldn't move," sometimes emphasizing the negatives, to nobody's discomfort, with a few equivocal epithets, for any body's appropriation.

So an hour and a half had gone by since Tom and Fairfax had chatted with each other from their window-sills, and the lamp had been taken into the Barownes' room; but still Fairfax had not made his appearance, and Tom had been dissuaded from disturbing him again.

They thought he was very busy indeed, and now he thought that he was busy himself. He was not aware, any more than his neighbors were, that the dark had come into his room, and that he was sitting with his head resting on his folded arms, above the Swiss soldier and Tom's face, which were sprinkled with the ashes of Sir Henry's Véritable, now lying half-smoked by his elbow.

But he was not by any means having such a tranquil time as he had before he dreamed himself into sleep. He

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had been on the march again, experiencing new phases, mixed with old ones of a startling and harassing kind.

He had found himself in his old room in St. Philip's Terrace, setting off for Switzerland with Lady Barowne's portrait instead of his rejected picture. Tom was going with him, and insisted that they should take this picture of Lady Barowne—that she would be their good angel—and he had cried because Fairfax had wanted to leave her behind; and had given a long dissertation on chance, all to prove that they would certainly lose each other if they once lost Lady Barowne.

Then he was in St. Jean again, and the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News* were clamoring for pen-and-ink sketches at any price he liked to name; but he could sketch nothing except Sir Henry Barowne until he had thrown Lady Barowne's portrait over a precipice when Tom wasn't looking.

And directly he had done it he found that he had lost Tom. He hunted for him everywhere, and at last thought he saw his little friend coming to meet him; but he turned out to be the postman with a great sackful of letters, all for him; they were his contributions to the illustrated papers, "declined with thanks."

Then he found himself with a good conscience climbing down the side of the precipice into pitch darkness to grope for Lady Barowne's portrait. He had found it, and brought it to the light, and the portrait had stepped out of the frame alive and laughed at him, and turned into the pretty, piquante, hazel-eyed little heroine of his first romance in this beautiful land of his dreams. She had

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taunted him with fickleness, and asked him what he had done with Tom—with Tom, the one true, unchangeable little friend who had stuck to him and believed in him through all his follies and failures.

And then she had disappeared too, and he found himself utterly alone, in a spreading and deepening mist, which came up from over the precipice where he stood, and he dared not take a step. He tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, thinking to write his name on it, and the date when he had been lost in the mist; but he found himself instead writing a long farewell letter to Tom, telling him that he would never have left him if he could have helped it, but that he was setting off on a long, long journey which people were always obliged to take alone.

Then the pencil in his hand had become a revolver, and he turned it over and looked at it and smiled at it, and then put it down to listen to the booming of some distant bell, like a fog bell, out in the dark. But it was St. Philip's clock striking twelve. Now he could see the church plainly in the starlight, and high over the black tower hung the constellation of Orion, like an image of the Crucifixion printed upon the soft blue sky in burning stars.

And anon he was tearing up his farewell letter to Tom, with his eyes full of soft and refreshing tears.

Again Lady Barowne's portrait had become his rejected picture, and he was going to postpone his migration from St. Philip's Terrace for the sake of Tom.

Again he heard Tom's old tattoo at his old window, and hurried to open it. There were Tom's clothes, and his

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mother's portrait, and his alarm-clock on the veranda, in a little heap by the window; but Tom was not there. Fairfax thought he had fallen over the veranda railings, and leaned over in horrible expectancy, to find himself looking down at the brilliant flower-beds under the windows of Le Bosquet. Tom was there, somewhere below, not to be seen, calling to him in pain: "Mr. Fairfax! Mr. Fairfax!"

Then he saw several of the servants running all to one place. There was a little hubbub of voices, growing nearer. They were bringing him to Fairfax's room. A bell was ringing. He heard Lady Barowne's clear voice giving orders. His door was opened; and Fairfax woke, as from a nightmare, with his heart beating violently.

Tom was in the middle of the room, sobbing:

"Mr. Fairfax!"

"What, Tom? Are you really there?"

"My father! Come—quick! Oh, Mr. Fairfax!"

"I was asleep, my poor boy. Hush! tell me!"

"He is ill. Come! He has had—his waistcoat is all covered with blood."

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CHAPTER XXV

"AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"

"BUT you are not to talk! Now don't talk; just let me sit here, and—and keep you company."

"All right, Tom. You've seen the last of Mr. Bland?"

"Yes; I went to the station with him."

Tom spoke in a most funereal kind of whisper by way of example, and pulled his chair yet a little nearer to his father's bed.

"He was very respectful to me, and I asked his pardon."

"Just like you. Well, he's been making it up to you. He's been doing another little job for me—more in his own line—managed it better this time."

"What? But never mind; you—you just listen to me, only listen."

"Why—any thing fresh, exciting?"

"Well, Madame Bayer has removed from there"—Tom turned his thumb toward the adjacent wall—"to No. 17, because her nerves, they make her cry for you in the night, and it—it spoils her breakfast. And Mr. Fairfax has got back from Lausanne. He has brought a whole lot of grapes and oranges, and a lump of ice as big as that." Tom spread his hands out pretty wide.

"That 'll be enough. He's a good fellow. Did *he* see the last of Mr. Bland?"

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"Yes."

"What did he say—Bland, I mean?"

"Oh, he was very respectful to him, more respectful even than yesterday, and quite different from before."

"Oh, he seems to have reformed altogether. You gave him a lesson, Tom. But what did he *say?*"

"Oh, he was in a hurry, you know—it was on the platform; but he shook his head and touched his little black bag, and said he was glad he was just in time——"

"Umph!"

"I suppose," said Tom, "he meant he was just in time to see Mr. Fairfax before he went."

"Yes, of course—that's what he'd mean. And did Mr. Fairfax seem pleased to see him—eh, Tom?"

"No; he doesn't care any thing about him—at least he doesn't like Mr. Bland. You know, he makes us remember—but, of course, that doesn't matter now. Are you comfortable, father?"

"Yes, Tom. Why doesn't he like him?"

"Oh, well, you know—we can't! Of course it wasn't his fault. But Mr. Fairfax is worse than me, and—he was very—oh, it made him awfully sad when Mr. Bland came this time. He said he would rather it had been ten doctors, and they would make you bad enough, you know. But wouldn't you rather I told you something else? Wag's been in the larder again, and he's eaten——"

"That 'll wait; we shall have it in the bill."

"Well, then, let us talk about you being painted. You know, we're all very much afraid that you'll——"

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"That I shall what?"

"That you'll change your mind. Of course you'd be very white, but you'd be very still; and if I had to leave you to go to school I—I should have something to remember you by. Mr. Fairfax says that he could just paint you enough for that in half an hour; and—well, I know we could get an idea about you being painted white—a beautiful idea!"

"Well, Tom, I'll think about it. Yes, I think you could get an idea, and—yes, I should like to be remembered. I'll think about it. But how do you mean that Mr. Fairfax is worse than you?"

"Well, he mayn't be worse; but he was worse just at first—when he first saw Mr. Bland. It made him very sad. You know, Mr. Bland seemed to come betwixt us and you; and see what a mess he made then. And I think—you know, this is just my own idea."

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Fairfax sits up with you half the night, and he helps the doctor. The doctor says he is better than two nurses, though not better than mother, and he would walk to Paris for you. And he would give you all he has. He said yesterday—you know, he was half talking to me and half talking to himself—he said if it would make you well he would give you every thing; but—you won't blame him—because, you know, you agreed to it?"

"No, get on."

"Well, he said he would give you any thing—every thing he had but—but his half of me. He—he has grown very fond of you."

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"And I've grown very fond of him, Tom. I should like to prolong the acquaintance—yes, I should—but—and he said that, did he, Tom? He's a good fellow; but what has that to do with Bland?"

"Oh, well, that is what I'm coming to—that is my idea. You know, of course, Mr. Bland is sorry for you; but I don't think he cares much—not very much more than the servants—and I think that Mr. Fairfax thinks that you might let him do your—your little jobs for you—writing letters and that."

"I'm going to. I'm going to let him do a great big job for me—very soon—yes, in a week or so. Tom!"

"Yes, father?"

"Haven't they told you?"

"What?"

"That I'm sending in my papers? Here, prop me up a bit more. They ought to have told you; I'm hardly up to it."

"Well, I'll ask them; don't you talk. I should send in every thing, if I were you—every thing that wants attending to—about money and things. Mr. Fairfax would do it—and—and you just rest."

"Here, I expect they knew you'd let it out and—spoil my dinner or something—as I've done for Madame Bayer. But you'll hold up—you'll take it fighting, Tom? I've some bad news!"

"Well, whisper it. They've told me you could never live in England again; but why? We could live in Australia. Now whisper. I'm so much afraid of you having another—another—you know—if you talk."

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"Another hemorrhage?"

Tom nodded his head.

"Couldn't—there's not another in me. I'm hollow. I'm just a shell. Wish I wasn't worth cracking. But, Tom!"

"Yes, father?"

"We've got fond of each other?"

"Yes; very, very much—as much as ever we could."

"As much as ever we shall?"

"Oh, no, no! Why, I love Mr. Fairfax now much—oh, ever so much more than I did three months ago."

"Yes; and you love me more than you did three days ago?"

"Yes, I do, I do. How did you find that out?"

"Oh, I found it out. I was quick; I have to be quick now, Tom."

Tom edged himself and his chair yet an inch nearer to the bed, and bent lovingly over Sir Henry's face, which had broken into a smile.

"You've had a mixed time of it with fathers and mothers. You've had more than most boys for your age."

"I never counted Mrs. Nodder as a mother."

"No; but you've had two fathers and two mothers without her, and you've done the square thing by the lot. But when I—when I—well, when I'm dead, Tom—you've always been a man, and I'll talk to you like a man—when I'm dead—— Now stop that! It's not fair, Tom. You know I can't put my fists up. I—I *am* a baby, and one's enough. Don't! Don't make it harder for me than it is!"

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Tom scraped his cheeks and dabbed his eyes with the knotted linen ball which a minute ago was a boy's handkerchief, and then thrust it as far as ever he could into the pocket of his knickerbockers, while he took hold of his father's hand, which Sir Henry had put out for him.

"No—no! I won't believe it! Mr. Fairfax doesn't say so, and—and mother doesn't, and the doctor only said you'll—you'll never be fit for any thing again. I heard him say that, but—why, you'll always be fit for us."

"Should I, Tom? Well, I sha'n't peg out a minute sooner than I'm obliged—not now. But I want to tell you I've been a poor hand, Tom, at making people happy; but I've been having a try at it, just at the last."

"You've been very good and very patient. Mother says you are too—too much so. It makes her cry."

"I don't wonder—such a great reaction. But I don't mean that way. I don't mean in taking medicine and saying my prayers. I've been doing something for you, Tom, and for your mother too. Yes, I think she'll like it——"

"What? Something for Mr. Fairfax, father?"

"That's just it. You are all there. You are on the spot, Tom. Thought I'd surprise you."

"So you do; but you have altered. You—you have got fond of each other."

"Well, I've just handed you back, Tom, out and out, that's it. I've made you over to him by the laws of Eng-

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land—you've a great respect for the laws of England, haven't you?—that's why I sent for Mr. Bland."

Tom only produced his handkerchief again, and shook his head and sobbed.

"Now don't do that, Tom. I've treated you like a man. You've always been a man ever since I knew you. You've propped me up; don't go and let me down at the last, because, you know, every-body must die some time, and I want to talk to you; I mean, I want you to talk to me. I say, are *you* afraid of death?"

Tom swallowed the lump in his throat, and again rammed his wet handkerchief back into his pocket.

"No—no—not for my—myself."

"I should think not—with your sins; you'd be a great coward if you were—but for *me?*"

"It's those that are left. It won't be you, it will be me, and—and mother, and Mr. Fairfax; but, oh, my poor old father! do you really know that you are going to die, here—at Le Bosquet—this—this summer?"

"There's no fencing with it, Tom. Let's be men. Here, prop me up a bit more. That's it. Now just have it out with that rag, once for all, and tell me when you're ready. Mine's under the pillow. Give it me. It's catching, Tom, and I'm very weak, and you're letting me down."

So they both used their handkerchiefs pretty freely—Sir Henry noisily, with a few ejaculations of apology and explanation, Tom savagely, and, save for the few loud sobs when he seemed to put it into his mouth with the intent to swallow it, he dabbed and scratched his face as

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before, as silently as he could. And at last he rammed it home again, and put his arm round his father's neck, and said he was ready.

"Very well, Tom. Then about this dying. I've never thought of it in all my life, not—not since I was your age, and then, of course, I—I was as plucky as you. But there's a text, Tom, I heard old Romsey preach from it at home this very last time, and I've thought of it every day since: 'And a little child shall lead them'—a little child shall lead them."

"Yes," said Tom, without a moment's hesitation, and with the dogmatism of a new-made bishop, "the little child is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"Yes, Tom; that was what he came to secondly. That was the application; but I liked the first part best. He—he might have got to know all about you and me. You know, my boy, I understand French, a lot of it, but I don't understand much that this *pasteur* says. I nod my head. But, you know, I'm just sweating myself away till he's gone, though he's very kind and nice when he says good-by. He brought me that geranium, and he preaches from it about the Christian life. But, you know, I'm not—not—educated up to that. Why, you wouldn't—you couldn't get much pluck out of that geranium, could you, Tom?"

Tom looked at the plant and shook his head solemnly, and thought very hard. Then he hazarded:

"Mother would talk to you best. You know, I have often been a wicked boy, but—well, I don't think I ever *was* an unbeliever; and you—well, you used to talk very

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disrespectfully about clergymen, didn't you? And mother, she is as good as any of them—better. I should talk to mother if—if—you have any doubts."

"But I haven't any doubts—not of that kind—and you're quite wrong, Tom. Your mother doesn't seem to help me at all; I can't even see the mark that she shoots at. She's gone to church, you know, two or three times a week since she was a baby—and she's nothing here, you know!"

"Where? What?"

Sir Henry laid his hand on his breast and sighed.

"Lead, my boy—lumps of it—sins, you know—a whole lifeful in layers, like one tombstone on the top of another, and it doesn't touch 'em to say 'Almighty and most merciful Father,' and I've heard all that your mother tells me a thousand times."

Tom looked solemner than ever and more puzzled; and remarked, after a long pause, in a tone of profound and sorrowful conviction:

"I'm afraid I don't know any thing about religion that mother doesn't know—I wish I did; and I've never been to church except on Sundays. But, I say, father!"

"Yes, Tom?"

"You've never been bad to *me!*"

"Yes, I have—to you and every-body; I've been a base, selfish, miserable cur for twenty years."

"Not to me!—and you've not been bad to any body since you've been my father; and you've been nothing but good to me. It's me that was bad. Look what I

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said to you, and you've—you've never even reminded me. Did you *read* that letter?"

"Yes," said Sir Henry, with a smile; "that's all right, my boy. I only laughed at it."

"Yes, and look how you travelled all that way—night and day, and—and fell down in a faint, and—and I thought nothing about it!"

"Of course not—it was nothing. I wanted to get hold of you; you were going in for your own phases too much. I—I thought it was about time, Tom."

"Oh, yes; and then look how we made it up—why, we made it up before we began to—to talk at all; and—and look how we laughed at those chairs and the one with a cushion on for your gout."

"Yes—yes, my boy; we've had a jolly time while it lasted—and, I say, Tom!"

"Yes, father?"

"I've done what I can, my lad, and it will be better for you and your mother too after a little time. I've made him your guardian—Mr. Fairfax—your father, you know—by the laws of England, and no one can take him from you now, and you'll be able to pay your way. I've done the thing handsomely, and I'm deuced thankful. It's done me good. It's the only out-and-out decent thing that I've done in my life."

Sir Henry made a long pause, and when he spoke again the old gay gleam had died out of his face.

"But what's all that to do with—with this?" He put his thin, bloodless hand on his breast again, and closed his

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eyes. "That's all betwixt you and me, Tom—betwixt you and me!"

Tom had left his chair again, and was leaning over the bed, with one arm round his father's neck.

"Why, that's what it has to do with—that's why I've been telling you. You've done all that just because you are my father, and, you know, God is just your Father. There isn't a bit of difference—not—not in your being fathers."

Sir Henry roused himself again.

"Why, you—you beat old Romsey! But—no, I had no idea you were going to spring that on me. I know it; I know it, Tom. They read that to me every day. 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts——'"

"Well, it's true; and, father!"

"Yes, Tom?"

"Look how I loved you all at once—directly I really got to know you—all in a minute—didn't I?"

"You did, Tom."

"But I didn't love you when they told me you were my father. I—well—I wanted you to let me alone. You know, I just thought of you as if you were Mr. Barowne, that's all, and I was only just polite to you, and—and look at us now. Oh, I was a very bad son!"

Sir Henry laughed.

"There now," Tom exclaimed with animation, "you are only laughing."

"Well, I'm listening, Tom, and I haven't laughed for two days. Go on; I'll be serious."

"Oh, I don't mind you laughing. I—I was very glad,

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and you only laughed at—at my wicked letter; and, father!"

"Yes, Tom, I'm following."

"Supposing we were all to go to England, and you were to go to Greyfort, and I was to go to school—to Eton, you know—we'll suppose it was three years from now."

Sir Henry sighed.

"And then suppose I wouldn't do any thing at school—only fight and—and get flogged, and enjoy myself, and I came home to you with—with very dirty clothes and black eyes, and a very bad report. Mr. Bocking generally put 'Conduct good as a rule,' because I used to fight there. Well, should you—you know, I'm only pretending——"

"I wish you weren't; I wish it was coming off!"

"What? Oh, I know; my poor, dear old father, I was a brute. But you don't mind. You know what I meant, don't you? You—you wouldn't want to stop being my father just because—because I had done that?"

Sir Henry smiled as he pressed Tom's hand. He did not speak, because he could not trust his voice. The tears were running openly down his face.

"And, you know"—Tom presented the deduction from his parabolically involved premises in one sweeping announcement—"you could not be as good a father as God is, though you are the very best father that could possibly be, and you will—it will be all your fault if you don't make it up."

Sir Henry did not even perceive the flagrant breach in

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Tom's logic, nor carp at his assumption of infallible comprehension. He let the tears run down his face unheeded, and squeezed Tom's little hand, and looked into the boy's bright, earnest, expectant face with assuring joy.

"Why, old—old Romsey was nowhere, Tom. Yes, yes! 'A little child shall lead them.' I sha'n't forget; you've done me good, Tom. But you don't know, my boy, and I can't tell you—twenty years of 'em—and I've never got rid of one. I can't tell you."

"But you can tell your *Father*."

"Yes, yes, I can; I have done. You've done it for me. But I can't forget. You know, this *pasteur* wants me to be jol—to—to seem happy. And is it likely? Except just when—when you're talking, Tom, they always come back."

"You mean long, long ago—the bad, awfully bad, wicked things you've done—and memories?"

Sir Henry nodded, and Tom once more fell into profound thought. After a time he spoke again:

"Father!"

Sir Henry turned his eyes to him with his old smile.

"*We* don't believe in purgatory, do we—Protestants?"

"Well, I don't know, Tom. I think we do now—a lot of us. Why?"

"Does mother?"

"No; I don't think she does."

"Oh, well, then, don't you! No, don't do that. But, I say, those awful memories, those bad, wicked sins?"

"Yes?"

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"Well, I wouldn't want them to go. Just—just keep them—let them stop as they are—and—and go on being sorry."

Sir Henry started. He did not laugh or even smile. He looked very hard at Tom and seemed to ponder his words deeply; they embodied an entirely new suggestion.

"You know that wicked letter I wrote to you, and—and my rebellion? I sha'n't forget them. They will make me very sad—oh, often—for years and years."

Sir Henry smiled:

"Nonsense, Tom!"

But the tears were in Tom's eyes.

"Oh! no, no, no—not all my life. But, of course, it won't make any difference, because we've made it up. And perhaps you will go on being sorry for those bad, wicked sins for—for I don't know how long. But it won't matter, because you will have made it up, you know, with your Father. Haven't you made it up?"

"I wouldn't say no, Tom."

"Well, then, what does it matter? You may be very sad, and, oh! suffer a great deal, not in purgatory, but *here*—you know." Tom put his hand to his breast just as his father had done. "But it won't matter, because, you know, God will still be your Father, just as you would have been mine, and—and have told me to never mind, to never mind this, you know"—he touched his breast—"and He will never stop, because—why, because you can't stop being fathers, can you, now?"

"Tom!"—Sir Henry put out his arms and spoke with difficulty, but not with any hesitation—"not another

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word, my boy! I don't think we can. Kiss me. I'm going to keep 'em. I—I hope to be sorry for a thousand years."

So Tom kissed his father and lay in his arms for many minutes. And they were both silent, thinking their own thoughts. What different thoughts!

Yes, from what a gulf of loneliness, from what an infinity of isolation, the sin-clogged, sinking, death-filmed spirit of Henry Barowne looked out upon the sweet, strong, star-like soul of his little boy!

Yes, one was a man who had done with life, and done with it about as badly as he could; the other was a child who was just beginning it under a bright halo of promise. But to the old, hard, unwrinkled sun, who was then tinting the Juras with the first tints of evening—just as he tinted the valleys there millions of years ago—they were the tiny twin children of a day—that man and his boy! And the old, unblinking, age-defying sun—what is that in the eye of God but the flickering night-light of a feverish hour?

Then if Tom was right, how frail and pitiable a babe must poor Henry Barowne have seemed to such a Father as that!

"Tom," said the sick man, after that interval of silence, "that's a beautiful picture!"

"Which, father? Do you mean Mrs.—mother's—in the garden?"

"No, my boy; up there! All that! Isn't it different from yesterday?"

"Oh, yes; up in the mountains. Why, we couldn't see

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them at all yesterday—there was nothing but clouds. I thought you meant Mr. Fairfax's."

"No—that! It beats Mr. Fairfax. It is calm! It was a very beautiful hand that did that, Tom; and it wasn't done in a day, that picture."

"Oh, no! Why, Mr. Fairfax says it takes a million years to——"

"Yes, I dare say—more! But never mind. Tom!"

"Yes, father?"

"Don't say any more about Mr. Fairfax coming here to—you know. I'm too far gone for him, but I think it's done—you know. I think I'm painted as—as white as could be expected!"

THE END

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